The resonant Museum

Sound, art and the politics of curating

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PhD Dissertation

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The Resonant Museum

Sound, Art and the Politics of Curating

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1. Situating

In my office I keep a small token. It is a part of a bone from a mammal or a large bird, broken across the stem in one end and with a joint in the other. It could perhaps have been a human bone having roughly the diameter of the ulna or one of the larger bones in the hand. It has become a sort of talisman for my research that I have fiddled between my fingers when thinking through the set of interests intersecting sound, curating, performance, politics and museums that carry this dissertation.

The bone tells a story and it has a history. I found it in the pile of chalk that remained after Claus Haxholm and Tobias R. Kirstein's performance, *Work is what separates us from the animals*, performed at Museet for Samtidskunst [The Museum of Contemporary Art] in Roskilde in June 2014. A performance I had commissioned for the 2014 *ACTS Festival for Performative Art*. Lying in the chalk, the bone caught my eye. Instinctively I knew that I had to keep it as a piece of physical evidence of their performance. Something tangible that I could hold on to, take home, objectify, and use as a symbol for – and signification of – the temporalities connected to this particular performance. During the planning of the performance, Haxholm, Kirstein and I had been talking about documentation. I was fascinated by their idea that hard, physical work is absorbed by, and changes, the working body leaving its own traces on that body. Traces that are ultimately connected to the experience of working but are intangible to a performance audience. Here in the chalk I now found a broken bone. The ultimate piece of evidence of external pressure on a body. Maybe the circumstances that broke this bone led to the death of the body it used to belong to? Maybe this was the only thing left of that physical labour? Animal or human, this ancient bone also symbolised the abstract nature of modern human labour (and performance art) underlined by the title *Work is what separates us from the animals.* The body that this particular bone had belonged to would probably have known no such concept. Work would have been very directly connected to survival.

Work is what separates us from the animals was a two-day durational performance where on the first day the artists manually moved four tons of chalk from the museum's courtyard and into the gallery with shovels and a wheelbarrow. On the second day they moved it back out again. This time filling it into a container made from wood and plastic that would eventually break under the weight of the chalk. The first day's manual labour was concluded by a white noise concert played from the museum's rooftop. On the

second day they started with a half hour of slowly evolving sine tones and drone sounds over a summoning repeated bell-like bass drum. This was also played from the rooftop immediately before they proceeded with moving the chalk. The artists' choice of chalk, movement, white noise, drones and sine tones as the primary materials of the performance was in a sense a display of the temporal and spatial dimensions involved in any performance. White noise and sine tone clusters as an amorphous sculptural sonic mass of transient immateriality – the experience of which changes dramatically according to the listener's subtlest movements in a specific architecture. Drones as a slowly evolving measurement of time. Chalk as an even slower material sedimentation of living organisms into solid form over millions of years of history.

The chalk for the performance had come from a mine at Stevns Klint, which is on UNESCO's world heritage list and renowned for its rich fossil findings. For a long time I unwittingly thought that my bone was a fossil. The idea that it carried ancient history, which was so symbolically laden in connection to the performance, was what compelled me to keep it. To me, the fossil contained and objectified both the transience of lived life and the solidity of material remains. At the same time, I quietly found myself somewhat foolish or even amusingly embarrassed when considering the banal joy I had in fetishizing this small token. I knew all along that it was just a symbol. That all the layers of signification I ascribed to it were mine and only mine. I knew that the body to which the bone had belonged would not have cared for the connection between itself and a piece of performance art in the 21st Century. But I kept it as a symbol.

That is some of the story the fossil is able to tell. However, at some point I took the time to do a little googling on the actual history of the fossils you can find at Stevns Klint. I discovered that the chalk layers containing fossils are around 65 million years old and that they are in fact old seabed. 65 million years? The end of the Mesozoic era? Seabed? Mammal or bird? Possibly human? Something did not add up. This would have been the end of the age of dinosaurs and the fossilised animals to be found at Stevns Klint are normally smaller sea creatures like crustaceans, worms, mussels, snails and occasionally the teeth of sharks.[1] I was having serious reservations about the authenticity of my talisman, so I contacted the geological museum at Stevns Klint just to

[1] http://www.kalklandet.dk/viden/kalkens-geologi/databaser/bestem-dit-fossil/fossiler-i-kalk (Accessed January 5, 2017).

get a rough idea of what it was. How old it was. And why it would be in the chalk. In the end it was not a fossil. According to the geologist[2] it is most probably a splinter from the lower leg of a deer or another cloven-hoofed animal. No more than 15.000 years old at the most, and perhaps only about 500 years old.

There is a considerable difference between the seabed life fossilised in the limestone at the end of the Mesozoic era – and a deer dying in the woods perhaps half a century ago, the bone of which incidentally ends up in a pile of chalk at a museum performance festival in 2014. However, this difference does not necessarily change the bone's powerful symbolic properties as a signifier of an archival drive and the problems of representation connected to the ephemerality, transience and disappearance of sound and performance. On the contrary, the difference between the actual history of the bone and my story of the fossil highlights the troubled relationship between the thing and the sign that haunts discussions of sound's relation to significance as well as performance's relation to the archive. With the art museum and curatorship as concrete backdrops, this dissertation theorises and critiques this relationship between things and signs from the performative perspective of sound.

[2] Thanks to curator of geology, PhD Jesper Milàn at Geomuseum Faxe, Østsjællands Museum for quickly and precisely analysing my photos and responding to my questions.

2. Introduction

The research presented by this dissertation has been formed through a series of curatorial projects connected to Museet for Samtidskunst [hereafter MFSK] in Roskilde, Denmark. With various affiliations such as intern, short term project researcher, associated external researcher up until my current position as a postdoctoral researcher, I have worked on and off at the MFSK since 2007. The primary work that feeds into this dissertation stems from the period 2013-2016, when I had the opportunity to conduct a series of curatorial projects as part of my PhD research. Apart from the already mentioned 2014 *ACTS Festival for Performative Art* for which I also commissioned a performance by Danish artist and composer Andreas Führer that resulted in the piece *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or?*, I have curated an iteration of American artist Kabir Carter's ongoing project *Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field* that took place in Copenhagen and concluded with an exhibition in Roskilde in 2015. I was also part of the curatorial team for the MFSK's 25th anniversary exhibition *Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.* that opened in 2016. Encompassing these quite diverse curatorial projects my research has centred on aspects of sound and sonic arts practice as an especially privileged site for interventions in the contemporary art museum institution and its surroundings.

The overarching theme for the dissertation is the fuzzy and permeable borders of sound, sociality and sonic artworks. Sound spreads from a source into the air or through solids. It activates, reverberates and transgresses spaces and listeners. It resonates with its surroundings both physically, historically and socially. It leaves no clear horizon or boundary in its spectrum from deafening to imperceptible. From subsonic to supersonic. From sensation to signification. Therefore the borders of the sonic artwork are at best difficult to assess, let alone delimit, by only addressing its sounding and audible dimensions. Matter, sensation and meaning are inextricably intertwined within sounding situations, and situations of audition are always relative to the context within which they resonate. Therefore it is difficult, in the case of sound, to identify any stable idea of the object or artwork. The sonic artwork is contingent because sound is always site-specific in the broadest sense of the term. Even recorded, sound becomes site-specific once it is transformed from digital or analogue file and projected to a listener as a physical wave within physical space. Accordingly, whether audible or not, sound changes depending on the

context or situation it is placed within. This relationality pertains both to sound as matter or artistic material, but also to the fact that it is always listened to under specific, concrete, situated circumstances. Sound's relationality thus always includes listening subjects that are bodily, materially, historically and conceptually mediated as well as situated.

This instability and contingent condition of the artwork and concomitant relational entwinement of materiality, sensory experience and signification is the situation and problem that sonic art practice confronts the art museum with. Sound is always situated and thus sonic art practice presents the museum with a set of challenges regarding its representation in archives and exhibitory contexts that highlight a distinction between intangible living culture and tangible material cultural heritage. Admittedly, Theodor W. Adorno's famous association of the museum with the mausoleum in "Valéry Proust Museum" (Adorno 1981) no longer seems a particularly apt description of contemporary art museums. However, the distinction in the essay between living culture or original context and heritage and death is still highly relevant with regards to the radical situatedness, relationality and temporal unfolding of sound and sonic experience. It is also relevant in the wider field of contemporary art since artworks are no longer just the paintings and sculptures that Adorno wrote about but now have come to include a whole range of other media, temporalities and strategies in increasingly mixed, enmeshed and transdisciplinary practices. As a consequence such practices demand other strategies for exhibiting, collecting, documenting and preserving compared to traditional delimitable art objects. Sonic art practice may be an exemplary case that can provide important insights to the discussions of intangibility, relationality and the immaterial elements of culture and cultural heritage. Sonic art practice and curatorship can thus invigorate the dominant modes of collecting and exhibiting at art museums that are still predominantly founded in material culture and objects. These broader issues of sound's and sonic art practice's context-dependencies, their imbrication in the larger social fabric, and their relations to the institution are discussed throughout the dissertation.

The figure of the resonant museum works on several levels throughout the dissertation. And as such it is a metaphor for the way I have let my empirical field and theoretical apparatus interact and intertwine. Still on a metaphoric level, I have worked from the assumption that museums, art practices and curatorship all resonate with their social

and political surroundings and histories, and that this resonance has partly been set in motion by my curatorial practice with sound. Resonance on this level is both part of the relational model of thinking that underlies the dissertation, and serves as a model for the museum as a space where pasts, presents and futures conjoin. It also describes how the inside of the institution resonates reciprocally with its outside and its public.

Acoustically, the concept of resonance denotes how one body is set in motion by the vibration or oscillation of another. This explanation focuses on the physical materiality of sound but it has also been used as a model to describe the relationship between sonority and subjectivity (Nancy 2007) as an alternative to prevailing linguistically and visually founded theories of representation and the subject. While this view runs as a trope through sound studies that I have been interested in dismantling, it also highlights a troubled and unresolved relation between sonority and representation that my work simultaneously forms part of. As musicologist Veit Erlmann has shown, resonance has a rich history of conflicting interpretations within science, music and philosophy (Erlmann 2010). Because the concept of resonance denotes both auditory perception and the metaphysics of the subject, he suggests that it is "eminently suited to dissolve the binary of the materiality of things and the immateriality of signs" (Erlmann 2010, 181). He also notes that an

> […] account of something such as resonance must therefore situate itself in a kind of echo chamber together with other things, signs, discourses, institutions, and practices. (Erlmann 2015, 181)

Aside from the somewhat uncomfortable connotations of the echo chamber as an enclosed and secluded space, this is precisely what I believe to have done throughout this project and within this dissertation. To speak of sound, research, curatorship, politics and the museum as resonant entails a perspective where sounding and resounding, reciprocity and representation, things and signs are enmeshed and simultaneously at work.

Sound and art

In the dissertation I apply a critical performative perspective to examine two cultural variables: sonic art practice and the contemporary art museum. As such, they each deserve a preliminary qualification and outline of my theoretical perspectives. In the opening lines of *Background Noise. Perspectives on sound art*, Brandon LaBelle writes:

> Sound is intrinsically and unignorably relational: it emanates, propagates, communicates, vibrates, and agitates; it leaves a body and enters others; it binds and unhinges, harmonizes and traumatizes; it

> sends the body moving, the mind dreaming, the air oscillating. It seemingly eludes definition, while having profound effect. (LaBelle 2006, ix)

This relational view of sound serves as a foundation for my discussions of how a curatorial engagement with sonic art practices might address, negotiate and enrich the complex cultural and political situation that the museum currently finds itself within. To LaBelle sound is first and foremost relational, and thus materially constituted through its vibratory physics as a capacity for one body to affect and be affected by another. The subjective engagement in this vibratory, physical and temporal situation is always bound to a concrete and embodied situation of audition that for LaBelle leads to an emphasis on the ephemerality and elusiveness of the ways in which sound becomes meaningful in human experience. Sound is thus "boundless on the one hand, and site-specific on the other" (LaBelle 2006, xi). The listening subject is always nested within a relation not only to the materiality of sound and the acoustic space in which it propagates, but also to and in the presence of other subjects, whether real or imagined. To LaBelle,

> […] the acoustical event is also a social one: in multiplying and expanding space, sound necessarily generates listeners and a multiplicity of acoustical "viewpoints," adding to the acoustical event the operations of sociality. (LaBelle 2006, x)

These views inform my discussions throughout the dissertation and have sparked my interest in a critique of the institutional conditions of both sonic art practice and the art museum where I examine the social, cultural and material configuration of spaces in which listening takes place. It is hence a fundamental condition for my work that I understand this complex social-material-cultural assemblage as part of sound's relationality and its co-productivity in the processes of sense-making. I am interested in how sound is always already social in the widest possible sense and how the embedment of any concrete listening situation in the materiality, historicity and sociality of sounds, listeners and sites informs perception. In this sense I view both intentional listening and non-intentional hearing as forms of culturally learned activities that depend on knowledge about a set of material and cultural codes and conventions – real or imagined, acknowledged or unnoticed. Different listeners, when exposed to the same sound, experience different things due to their spatial orientation as well as their physical, cultural, social and historical predispositions. The listening situation is thus both normative

in the sense that listeners are always culturally predisposed – and simultaneously idiosyncratic since any determination of such predisposition can only be individual.

One of the institutionalised objects for my critique is the notion of *sound art* that I suggest is replaced with the concepts of sonic art practice and/or sounding situations. LaBelle offers the following definition of sound art: "Sound art as a practice harnesses, describes, analyzes, performs, and interrogates the condition of sound and the processes by which it operates" (LaBelle 2006, ix). Cast as such, sound art is primarily art *about* sound. However, the careful wording that highlights the *condition* of sound (as opposed to sound in itself or as a medium) is interesting as it broadens the scope to also include sound's embedment within the socio-cultural contexts that I am interested in examining. Furthermore, LaBelle does not define sound art in terms of medium or materiality but rather in terms of a *practice* that interrogates the *condition*. This is a fairly open definition, especially by the inclusion of the broad spectrum of the "processes by which [sound] operates" that can easily be interpreted to include the contextual, social, historical, performative and indeed relational conditions of the situations in which one may encounter sound in the arts – the exact conditions that are the focus of this dissertation.

LaBelle not only analyses but also constructs this condition. By its genealogical approach and its highly informed interpretations, his account of sound art implicitly constructs a canon of emblematic artworks. This canon, and the way LaBelle presents it, is closely related to an avant-garde aesthetics of material experimentalism, expansion and transgression that finds its roots in practices such as Fluxus, musique concrete, and American minimalism in the 1960s, which are important historic anchoring points in the genre identity he establishes for sound art. With various emphases, this identification of sound art with the neo-avant-garde (and in some cases also the historical avant-garde) is also evident in most other influential histories of sound art. Seth Kim-Cohen's *In the Blink of an Ear* (Kim-Cohen 2009), Alan Licht's *Sound Art* (Licht 2007), Douglas Kahn's *Noise Water Meat* (Kahn 1999), Helga de la Motte-Haber's *Kangkunst. Tönende Objekte und klingende Räume* (de la Motte-Haber 1999) as well as the various writings of Christoph Cox (Cox 2011, Cox 2012, Cox and Warner 2004) and Peter Weibel (Weibel 2012) are all histories that have participated in the construction of a canon of works and related discourses around the term sound art. Such canons and works, I believe, form the conceptual and behavioural framing of situations in which so-called sound art is encountered.

In the appendix to the second edition of *Background Noise*, LaBelle's writes that he is attentive to

> […] how sound art addresses myself as a sensing body full of culture, a body pressed and shaped by those agents of language and lawfulness, and involved with others. (LaBelle 2015, 296-297)

The notion of an enculturated body he argues for is instrumental to my analyses in this dissertation where I have been interested in deconstructing the practices of listening in the context of sound art as cultural performances. Through the notion of the sounding situation my analyses show how sonic experience is always relative and embedded in structures of repetition and difference. By emphasising the cultural and bodily dimensions of listening and engaging with artworks that use sound, it becomes clear that the scope and margins of any singular listening situation needs to be discussed with a view to the relative possibilities for performative transgressions or (re)iterations of existent contextual and sociocultural norms and power structures.

In this connection, the concept of "adequate modes of listening" proposed by Ola Stockfelt (Stockfelt 1997) in relation to music also pertains to so-called sound art. At least insofar as sound art can be identifiable as an artistic genre or category and insofar as its institutions (e.g. the museum) can be said to operate within a frame of governmentality as mechanisms that structure aesthetic experience. In light of the above-mentioned historicization and canonization of sound art as springing from various neo-avant-garde practices, the transgression of such adequate modes of listening is of course part and parcel with sound art's identity. Stockfelt makes a point in showing how such identity is developed in tandem with institutions and how the relation between listener and sound is socially constructed through and through in ways where the "genre-normative listening situations are not absolute but perpetually changing in tandem with changes in society" (Stockfelt 1997, 136-137). Through this lens the penchant within the sound art community for the transgression of artistic borders or expansion of listening concepts becomes yet another normative convention within sound art when viewed as a social construction. As this dissertation argues, participation in any event of listening is not only a relation between a sound and a listener, but rather a complex cultural and relational weave of performative restraints and potentials, (re)iterations and agencies.

Throughout the dissertation I only engage sporadically with the historical canon of works and artists that LaBelle and other sources construct. While such canons serve as

an important backdrop I am more oriented towards the forms of cultural normativity that such canons might aid to produce and institutionalise. I am interested in the ways sound "structures socially" (LaBelle 2006, xi). An important part of that is the historical and cultural predispositions set up by established canons of work that guide how such structuring is enacted in concrete listening situations. I believe the definitions of sound art that LaBelle and others construct come to form part of the background and the contextual and sociocultural norms that relate to listening in the context of sound art. They are embedded within concrete listening situations as a backdrop that informs experience and the generation of meaning.

Another important part of this backdrop is formed by exhibition history, which in my view participates in shaping how we understand historic as well as contemporary sonic art practice, presentation and reception. In this context Seth Cluett has identified three phases in the curatorial investment with sound: Firstly, from 1966 until the early 1980s, a period where curators became increasingly aware of artists working with sound. Secondly from 1980, where sound became the primary focus for some artists leading to a more medium-specific curatorial discourse to take shape. And finally from around 2003, a more polarised engagement either tending toward large retrospective or medium-specific comprehensive group shows[3] on the one hand. And on the other hand, a tendency where

> […] artists, curators, and the public are less concerned that pieces are soundful and more interested in reevaluating the soundful for meaning, intent, idea, and relevance. (Cluett 2014, 118)

The observation made by Cluett that contemporary exhibitions with sound tend to be divided between medium-specific and post-medium approaches is also apparent in recent theoretical approaches. G Douglas Barrett has for instance showed how sound art discourse's preoccupation with sound's medium specificity in many ways is parallel to absolute music's ideas of "sound as an autonomous medium" (Barrett 2016, 5). He argues that theoretical positions that make this "taxonomical short cut between material and medium" (Barrett 2016, 5) by insisting that sound art is essentially about sound, are in essence "Greenbergian" in much the same manner as sound art theory itself initially set out to criticise and distinguish itself from absolute music. The idea that sound

[3] For instance, the exhibitions *Sound Art. Klang als Medium der Kunst* in 2012 at the ZKM in Karlsruhe or *Soundings: A Contemporary Score* in 2013 at MoMA in New York.

art is primarily focused on investigating its own medium echoes Clement Greenberg's emphasis on painting's preoccupation with the flatness of the canvas and his insistence on clearly drawing boundaries between the different media within the visual arts.[4] As Greenberg put it:

> The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself – not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. (Greenberg 1982, 5)

While attempts to try to define sound art on the basis of the medium have certainly had their historical relevance in establishing a critical vocabulary and in trying to delimit, justify and secure institutional support for emergent artistic practices it is now time to move on. My perspective in this dissertation presupposes that sound has entered a much wider range of artistic practices without necessarily turning them into an entrenched area of competence whose identity rests on a primary concern for the medium-specificity of sound itself. I believe that the essentialisms implied by a focus on medium-specificity prohibit the open frames for understanding of artistic work with sound as a practice that is embedded in cultural and social contexts. In acknowledgement of this post-medium perspective and the fundamental (material *and* social) relationality, I speak of artistic practice with sound, sonic art practice, sounding situations and related terms throughout the dissertation in an attempt to try to escape some of the entrenchments *within* the discourse on *sound art.*

One of the strengths of approaching sound and artistic practice with sound as relational formations that are both material and social is that it does not promote the dichotomy between the auditory and the visual. This dichotomy has most forcefully been critiqued by media theorist Jonathan Sterne under the rubric of "the audiovisual litany" (Sterne 2003, 10-19).[5] A critique, which is a fundamental frame of reference for my own work

[4] I owe my colleague, curator at the MFSK Magnus Kaslov, thanks for formulating my own unease about sound art theory's obsession with the medium-specificity of sound in specific relation to Clement Greenberg's essentialist modernism. This perspective was a point of departure in a paper he delivered at the "Presenting Sound Art Conference" on 5 December 2017 at the National Gallery of Denmark.

[5] The choice of the word litany seems to have a double meaning. It is partly and explicitly a critique of the Christian prejudices inherent in Walter Ong's work on orality (Ong 2002), and by implication also a critique of the uncritical reception that this work, as well as that of Marshal McLuhan on visual and acoustic space (McLuhan 2004), has met within scholarly studies on sound.

and one to which this dissertation also seeks to contribute. I share Sterne's suspicion of the approaches within sound (art) studies that implicitly or explicitly rest on the idea that sound and listening offer a critical vantage point compared to the visual or textual domains. The audiovisual litany presents itself as a set of almost naturalised and essentialist binary assumptions about the differences between the auditory and the visual. The list of binaries goes as follows:

> hearing is spherical, vision is directional;
>
> hearing immerses its subject, vision offers a perspective;
>
> sounds come to us, vision travels to its object;
>
> hearing is concerned with interiors, vision is concerned with surfaces;
>
> hearing involves physical contact with the outside world, vision requires distance from it;
>
> hearing places us inside an event, seeing gives us a perspective on the event;
>
> hearing tends toward subjectivity, vision tends toward objectivity
>
> hearing brings us into the living world, sight moves us toward atrophy and death;
>
> hearing is about affect, vision is about intellect;
>
> hearing is a primarily temporal sense, vision is a primarily spatial sense;
>
> hearing is a sense that immerses us in the world, vision is a sense that removes us from it. (Sterne 2003, 15)

In his critique of these assumptions, Sterne contends that sound is not a naturally given phenomenon although the differences between the sonic and the visual, between hearing and seeing "are often considered as biological, psychological, and physical facts, the implication being that they are a necessary starting point for the cultural analysis of sound" (Sterne 2003, 15). Contrary to this he sees sound as a human, social and historical construct ultimately based on how the (equally constructed) faculty of human hearing is able to perceive the larger continuum of vibration that sound is but a portion of. In other words, sound is a variable and not a constant and "the history of sound is of necessity an externalist and contextualist endeavor. Sound is an artifact of the messy and political human sphere" (Sterne 2003, 13). To put that in other words is to say that as long as we base our conception of sound on human hearing, sound is inherently a

social, relational and cultural construct. Just as listening is a situated practice that performs this construct. It is precisely this construct and its performative dimensions that I engage with in this dissertation.

The contemporary art museum

The other cultural variable in my work is the contemporary art museum and the changes that this institution is currently undergoing. I have used the MFSK as a testing ground and collaborator in this project. Throughout the dissertation I use the acronym MFSK to denote this particular museum and apply a more general *the museum*, which interchangeably refers to the MFSK and to museums (of contemporary art) in a more general sense. I have tried as much as possible to make this clear from the context although I have allowed a certain slippage to occur in order to express the entanglement of my work in the larger political debate about museums. I am aware that the specific context of the MFSK cannot be generalised. However, I believe that my general attention to context throughout the dissertation may be of value elsewhere. By using the MFSK as an exemplary case, I thus aim to address the broader museum community. Especially the parts of it operating within the field of contemporary sonic art practice.

The dissertation rests on the general assumption that art museums are central institutions for our democratic societies and that they both reflect and partake in shaping democratic discourse. This view is motivated by the opinion that museums, as public institutions, form an essential part of the biopolitical apparatus by which governance is enacted in the form of providing incentives to individual self-government. This entails that the subjects of the state are not under direct disciplinary control but rather governed through indirect mechanisms that work ""through society," through programs that shape, guide, channel" the subjects into being responsible and "self-disciplining social subjects" (Hay 2003, 166). In this apparatus the museum is precisely such a program as a public institution. It is a visible and important battleground for the shaping of ideologies and subjects in which I engage throughout the dissertation in a critique of the indirect mechanisms of self-disciplining. To borrow the words of sociologist Tony Bennett I am interested in critiquing how the museum functions to incorporate "the people within the processes of the state" (Bennett 1988, 99) and democracy.

According to the International Council of Museums' (ICOM) statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna in 2007, a

> […] museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.[6]

Traditionally the safeguarding of heritage has been seen as the foundation of museums and as one of the most important pillars in this museum definition. In the ICOM "Code of Ethics for Museums", which is the standard reference document for "principles generally accepted by the international museum community" (ICOM 2017, preamble) this is stated very clearly. The first principle of the ICOM code defines museums as heritage institutions. The second principle adds that museums have the "duty to acquire, preserve and promote their collections as a contribution to safeguarding the natural, cultural and scientific heritage" (ICOM 2017, 8). The third principle defines the holdings of museum collections as "primary evidence" of this heritage. To people within museum professions this is part and parcel with their everyday routines. But as I will discuss throughout this dissertation, these values and their execution have increasingly become countered by demands for a more inclusive and relevant museum where audience participation and strategies for actualising content are favoured as part of a general reorientation from a focus on collections to a focus on museum visitors.

This perspective, which in part can be summed up by an increased focus on the museum visitor's knowledge production, owes a great deal to the increased interest in museums as learning institutions heralded by the so-called new museology (Hooper-Greenhill 1994, 2007, Falk 2000, Falk, Dierking, and Foutz 2007). It also marks a general shift of focus from content to user in the face of new networked sociality and experience economy. This includes concerns and issues of relevance that are founded on a more individualistic view of identities compared to previous models of society and governance. Working in tandem with the institutions' own desires to engage more openly and directly with their audiences on terrain partly defined by the audiences themselves (Simon 2010, Black 2012, Sørensen 2016), one of the important backdrops for this institutional discourse has been the so-called participatory art (Bishop 2006, 2012, 2004), relational aesthetics (Bourriaud 2002) and collaborative practices (Kester 2011). These

[6] See https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/ (accessed 6 August 2018). At the latest General Assembly in 2018 steps were taken towards a revision of the definition, which it is currently undergoing.

latter (mainly artistic) strategies may have developed in part as a critique of the instrumentalisation of art and the economies of expediency (Yúdice 2003) within the institutional apparatus. However, both artistic and institutional strategies are part of a more general tendency to democratise and dissolve modernist notions of autonomous and elitist art in order to generate more fluent and diversified conceptions of contemporary art, museums, the subject and culture in general.

At the MFSK, audience involvement, dialogic strategies, local engagement, performative and participatory formats were part of the museum's self-image right from the inauguration in 1991 (Bech 2016).[7] This rested on the idea that contemporary art as it was described in the original statutes (Bech, Birkebæk, and et.al. 1988) challenged conventional conceptions of the artwork by being intermedial, processual and by critically engaging with traditionalist ideas of the artwork as primarily an object. The museum's acquisition strategy was not primarily aimed at collecting artworks-as-objects. On the contrary, the intention was to "make space for and to document the development taking place at any time" (Bech, Birkebæk, and et.al. 1988, my translation)[8] based on a conviction that the "whole idea of contemporary art was that it would not let itself be detained by the notion of the artwork" (Bech 2016, my translation).[9] This definition highlights the temporal and processual aspects of contemporary art since the 1960s found in practices of sound, performance, media art and their intersections, which was the museum's main focus areas. The definition also pertains to the participatory elements inherent to and beyond such practices. Since the MFSK's inauguration in 1991 a lot of such practices have become institutionalised. What was seen to be cutting-edge in the late 1980s and up through the 1990s had become thoroughly institutionalised by the end of the 2010s (Olsen 2016) as artistic practices that museums knew exactly how to

[7] This is evident in the foundation of the museum, which sprung from the milieu around the local Galleri Sct. Agnes. Amongst other things, Galleri Sct. Agnes organised the Festival of Fantastics in 1985 that brought together ten internationally renowned artists associated with Fluxus for a ten-day festival in and around Roskilde where several public and participatory events and performances unfolded. The festival archive was inherited by the MFSK at its inauguration and has subsequently (2009) been made publicly accessible by the website http://www.festivaloffantastics.com (accessed 15 November 2017) that documents the festival and presents the memories of audiences and participants.

[8] Original wording in Danish: "[…] det primære vil være at skabe rum for og dokumentere den til enhver tid stedfindende udvikling" (Bech, Birkebæk, and et.al. 1988).

[9] Original quote in Danish: "Primært er museet ikke værksamlende fordi hele tanken omkring samtidskunsten strider imod at man fastholder værker" (Bech 2016).

acquire, conserve and exhibit. Performance relics, artist-sanctioned documentation editions, re-enactments or re-instalments based on archival materials etc. are now all elements that circulate the contemporary art market (and its museums) effortlessly through conventional economic channels and modes of representation. However, as I will discuss in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6, the situational aspects of sound still present the museum with challenges regarding its representation in collections and exhibitions.

If the idea of the museum is traditionally associated with its collection and archives, then the exhibition has equally been the museum's primary mode of address. But as I have already hinted in the above, there has been a shift within the museum institution itself where focus has partly moved from objects to processes. As part of the general reorientation from collections to museum users museums are increasingly working in formats other than exhibitions such as festivals, participatory projects, learning, talks, late-nights and performances in attempts to make the museum a more compelling social meeting place. At the MFSK this discursive climate fed into the formulation of a new vision statement in 2013 that highlighted terms such as "action and participation" (Olsen 2013). In this vision statement it was specified that the MFSK was a museum of the living arts with a mission to

> […] work with the art created today by living artists and the art, which uses action and participation as an artistic strategy, either as performance, concert, in its narrative or in the dialogue with an audience. (Olsen 2013, 3, my translation)[10]

When formulating my research project I found the application of this vision into actual practice to rely too heavily on representational "show and tell" (Bennett 1988, 99) rather narrowly defined by the medium of the exhibition as the museum's primary mode of exchange. Put bluntly it seemed to me that the joint notions of action and participation were being *displayed* and *represented* traditionally as art historical phenomena through exhibitions, instead of being *examined* or *enacted* as institutional strategies to create engaged and sustained participation at the level of the museum visitors.[11] In order

[10] Original wording in Danish: "Museet skal arbejde med den kunst, som skabes i dag af nulevende kunstnere og med den kunst, der benytter sig af handlingen og deltagelsen som kunstnerisk strategi, hvad enten det er som performance, koncert, i fortællingen eller i dialogen med publikum" (Olsen 2013, 3).

[11] My critique is mainly directed towards the museum's main curatorial profile at the time. There were activities enacting participation carried out with specific regard to learning and children or as part of singular public performance programming (including the biannual *ACTS* festival). It should also be mentioned that the project *The Museum Goes Out* [Museet går i byen]

to qualify the representational and the participatory perspectives of museum practice, I address throughout the dissertation how these changing views, where emphasis on artefacts and identity has shifted to a focus on production, processes and commonality (Rogoff 2005, Rogoff and Schneider 2008), can be addressed curatorially from the perspective of sound. As such, the dissertation investigates and contributes to the discourse around what Nora Sternfeld, with reference to Irit Rogoff, has termed "the post-representative museum" (Sternfeld 2013) and "post-representational curating" (Sternfeld and Ziaja 2012).

While the reorientation towards the museum user is certainly a welcome development in terms of museums wanting to be relevant to broader groups of society, it also participates in constructing the museum as a place of spectacle on the terms of visibility within the experience economy, and in competition with other cultural affordances. This competition for attention is growing and audiences can no longer be taken for granted. As curator Paul O'Neill has shown, the scale and number of international biennials since the 1990s has become an example of how the art world economy, whether real or symbolic, is increasingly built on spectacle and the spectacular (O'Neill 2012). This has put museums under pressure to invent more compelling and visible formats. This tendency is reflected and reinforced by the economic structures and support systems that underlie public museums. While most museums in Denmark are funded by means of subsidies from the state and municipalities, in most cases this funding only covers day-to-day operations such as buildings, maintenance, salaries, administration etc. Exhibitions and other programming increasingly have to be funded by grants, private foundations and sponsors. The competition for this money is fierce and donating organisations are also interested in buying into the economy of visibility. This growing privatisation of the funding system and increased competition thus partakes in the reorientation of focus from traditional content-based values to visibility, spectacle and an expedient view of culture as a resource (Yúdice 2003) that I will discuss in detail in Chapter 3. This means that museums have increasingly entered into the flow of production and that content is increasingly being cast in terms of knowledge production rather than knowledge dissemination. This dissertation taps into this discourse by examining

was initiated in 2013 by then museum director Sanne Kofod Olsen around the same time as I formulated my research project. With *The Museum Goes Out* the main objective was to bring contemporary art out of the museum and into public space in an attempt to soften the representational logic of the exhibition space and engage in a broader dialogue with the public.

how the museum, to a certain extent, is becoming democratised. I examine how discourse on museums and curating has moved from gravitating around the museum as merely reflecting culture, to an increased focus on how the museum and the curator participates in the production and presentation of knowledge (Olsen 2011), and how the museum has become part of the experience economy (Bishop 2013, 5).

In this situation where museums are becoming more user-oriented, networked, post-representational and increasingly take part in the experience economy, the central values of the museum as a heritage institution are also brought into question. My work progresses from the general assumption that art museums form part of a larger societal and biopolitical apparatus. From that perspective the developments toward transdisciplinary, context-bound and situational art practices, as well as the acknowledgement of the museum's own post-representative role as a site for collaborative knowledge production, have not made the questions of representation connected to the museum's obligations as a heritage institution any simpler. Rather, this development questions the relevance of traditional core functions and values related to exhibitions, collections, archives and cultural heritage. This dissertation is not an attempt to answer these questions, which would be like shooting at several moving targets at once. However, by seeing the museum as a variable, as an institution that evolves through its reciprocal relationships with audiences, art practices, politics and economics, it is my intention to qualify the ongoing debate.

Performativity as cultural critique

The above views have been developed from a theoretical perspective embedded within the tradition of performance studies. To borrow the words of Diana Taylor, "performance, for me, functions as an episteme, a way of knowing, not simply an object of analysis" (Taylor 2003, xvi). To put it in simpler terms, my perspective in this dissertation is driven by an interest in what stuff does and how meanings are constructed through agency in relation to cultural patterns and artistic materials. Throughout the dissertation I look at how artworks function as iterations within a broader framework of performativity and cultural performance. Following Camilla Jalving, this means that I pay attention to the agency of things *as well as* the signs that these things represent (Jalving 2011, 12-13). Inherently, I look at the cultural mechanisms and contexts that underlie the museum, artworks, artistic and curatorial practice and sound art theory

from a perspective implying that behaviour is culturally and historically patterned, and that enactments within these contexts must necessarily be seen on this background.

However, with various emphases my analyses shift between both deconstructive and constructive performative perspectives. The history of modern performativity is often told via a direct line from J.L. Austin's performative speech acts, over Derrida's repetitious iterability to Judith Butler's gender performativity (Jalving 2011, 46-66, von Hantelmann 2010) (Parker and Sedgwick 2007, Bial 2007, Fischer-Lichte 2008, 24-29).[12] Though emphasis differs slightly in these accounts, performativity is basically conceptualised through the repetitive structure of language where enactment is only effective and meaningful when it is understood on the background of other enactments. This means that difference can only ever be understood through its relation to repetition, which in turn is a fundamental structuring principle of social life. In this dissertation I apply this notion of performativity broadly at the level of cultural analysis. Both as a way of acknowledging a fundamental power/knowledge formation at the level of the museum as an apparatus but also in acknowledgement of my belief that art practice can offer "the sometimes radical oppositional theme" (Foucault 2008, 320) to critique and transgress biopolitical power.[13] It also runs through my analyses of the discourses that surround the notion of sound art, which I see as structuring behavioural patterns for the performance of listening and/or engaging with sounding artworks.

My choice of curatorial practice as a research method to investigate the relations between sound and the art museum also implies a different, and perhaps more radical, performative horizon as a central theoretical perspective. Where the above position is deconstructive, this other perspective builds on a mainly Deleuzian constructivist framework. My motivation to apply this perspective has to be seen within the broader frame of the critique of representation combined, as the following chapter will show, with methodological reflections on the position I have been able to occupy in my curatorial fieldwork and writing. This grouping of a notion of performativity that rests on

[12] Fischer-Lichte leaves out Derrida and progresses directly from Austin to Butler.

[13] This shows an often underexposed side in the above-mentioned accounts of performativity where there is a fundamental affinity between and Michel Foucault's coupling of knowledge/power formations with biopolitics and Judith Butler's gender performativity in which the idea of disidentification, by which the transgressive agency of the individual that "fails to repeat loyally" (Butler 2011, 167) has the potential to negotiate or subvert marginalised identities.

repetitious iterability and Deleuze might seem strange or almost contradictory, and as such it demands a clarification of my application of the concept. For Deleuze, difference is not understood as an effect of repetition. On the contrary, as he develops the concept along his readings of Bergson (Deleuze 1991) difference is seen as virtual and understood as a multiplicity that might (or might not) actualise itself and thus attain resemblance with something else. The decisive element is that the processes by which the virtual is actualised does not follow the rules of

> […] resemblance and limitation, but those of difference or divergence and of creation. […] It is difference that is primary in the process of actualization – the difference between the virtual from which we begin and the actuals at which we arrive. (Deleuze 1991, 97)

The Deleuzian concept of difference is akin to Donna Haraway's idea of displacing "the terminology of reproduction with that of generation" (Haraway 1992, 299). For Haraway this necessitates a strategy of diffraction as a fundamental tool for knowledge production. In writing about my own practice as a curator I have adapted this Harawayan idea of performative diffraction by looking less at what the projects I have curated might offer for a hermeneutical analysis at the level of the artwork, and looking more at how the artworks have been co-productive in generating theory and constructing critique aimed at a broader set of social and historical patterns related to sound and the museum. As I detail in the next chapter, this notion of performative diffraction can be described as a mapping of "where the *effects* of difference appear" (Haraway 1992, 300)[14]. The performative principle of iterability is here recast as production that displaces reproduction because it is inevitably invested in "the generation of novel forms" (Haraway 1992, 299). Slavoj Žižek has remarked that "Deleuze and Derrida speak different, totally incompatible, languages, with no shared ground between them," (Žižek 2004, 47) and that the deconstructive approach of Derrida is in sharp contrast to the constructivist, and sometimes violently subversive, benevolence applied by Deleuze. Yet as this dissertation will show, I have found both the deconstructive and the constructive approaches to be productive and complementary at a methodological level, however theoretically incompatible they may be. As the reader will learn the great empirical diversity of my material has necessitated a certain eclecticism, perhaps at the

[14] Throughout the dissertation italics and other emphases in original quotations are kept in my text unless otherwise stated. In the cases where I have added emphases to quotations it is stated in the citation.

expense of more rigorous applications of theory. This ambiguity is both a weakness and a strength within the project.

A final note of introduction must address the status of artworks for my analyses. It can rightly be argued that I do not ascribe much performative agency or power of transgression to the artworks I engage with and that I use them as vehicles to advance a series of predominantly theoretical and institutional arguments on the level of cultural critique. That is a risk I am willing to take. While this strategy may be questionable from an art historical point of view, I do not see that it diminishes or neglects the potential of the artworks. In fact it does the exact opposite. Throughout the dissertation I theorise and critique *with* and *from* the artworks and art practices rather than *about* them. It has not been my intention to overwrite or encode these artworks and practices but rather to performatively turn them into diffraction machines in order to make space for their continuous unfolding via a critique of their contexts.

Summary of chapters

Apart from this introduction the dissertation falls in five main chapters and a conclusion. The second chapter lays out the methodological conditions for, and situates my writing in relation to, the curatorial work it emanates from. Chapters 3 and 4 delineate two different theoretical and institutional horizons for the dissertation's fundamental variables – for the museum, and for artistic and curatorial work with sound, respectively. As such they prepare for the remaining two chapters' discussions of how sounding practices and situations might affect thinking about two of the fundamental functions of all museums, namely the archive and the exhibition. The conclusion combines some of the ideas developed throughout the dissertation and suggests a way forward for curatorial work with sound in the context of the museum institution.

In Chapter 2, *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or?*, I play with the metaphors of map and territory in order address the issues of representation that permeate the dissertation – not least on a methodological level. I discuss and use my work with a performance piece by Danish artist Andreas Führer titled *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or?* in order to clarify my own situatedness and address the implications of doing practice-based curatorial research by commissioning artworks and projects. Such research, I argue, is enacted through committed collaborations and is thus permeated with contingencies that have appeared both in relation to the artists I have worked with as well as

the academic and museum institutions where my research has been conducted. In clarifying my empirical position within the project I draw on theoretical frameworks mainly from anthropology and curatorial studies that enable me to inhabit a middle position that is both embedded and critical. This position in-between curatorial practice and academic research also sets the scene for how I am able to write about the projects and artworks that have ensued from my practice. I argue that my situatedness necessitates a constructivist performative approach that draws on Donna Haraway's notion of diffraction (Haraway 1988) rather than a hermeneutical or art historical explication of the significance and meaning of the artworks and projects I have curated. As such, the chapter also lays the ground for the remainder of the dissertation's focus on and critique of the political, social and theoretical contexts that these artworks and institutional frameworks have provided and produced.

As part of my practical research I co-curated the MFSK's 25th anniversary exhibition *Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.* in 2016. In the planning phase for this exhibition we discussed in the curatorial team how the move from an elitist notion of democratisation of culture towards a more inclusive understanding of cultural democracy seemed necessary in order to renew the museum. In Chapter 3, *Museums and cultural democracy*, I take these discussions as a starting point to examine the current state of the contemporary art museum institution with a special emphasis on cultural democracy such as it has been deployed in Danish cultural policy. Building mainly on a Foucauldian framework, my analyses engage with issues of historic and contemporary cultural policy as well as with central museological positions to show how culture is increasingly being understood as an expedient resource for biopolitical measures. I also argue how this understanding is rooted equally in the museum community's increased focus on their users and in the political demands for relevance and actualisation that currently govern the practice of most Danish public museums. To counter the tendencies towards expediency I argue that art museums should not simply abandon a supposedly outdated elitism for more contemporary participatory forms of inclusion – a shift which would ultimately empty out the importance and relevance of art and thus also the museum itself. Rather it is a question of maintaining these tensions as productive forces in which contemporary art and curatorship might constitute the necessary antagonisms that can sustain and nurture critical forms of participation and spectatorship in order to counterbal-

ance the museum's imbrication in the biopolitical fabric of the state and of late-capitalist society. As such, the chapter engages in deconstructing the contexts for my practical curatorial work and combines cultural analysis with the diffractive form of cultural critique that I employ throughout the dissertation.

Where Chapter 3 focused on the political and societal context of the art museum, Chapter 4, *Sound and situation*, interrogates how sound and listening might address the issues of participation connected to current museum debates. Building on my curation of the participatory and sound focused art project *Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field* by American artist Kabir Carter, I discuss how institutionalised modes of reception affect how we might conceive the sounding artwork. Being a project, the *Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field* is difficult to delimit and discuss in terms that normally circumscribe sound art discourse. In specific, I argue that neither the phenomenological approach taken by Salomé Voegelin or the deconstructive conviction of Seth Kim-Cohen are able to account for the complex entwinement of phenomenological, discursive and institutional elements within the project. Nor are they able to account for the contexts that the project is part of. Rather than look at artistic work as specific contextualised situations, both positions engender and imply certain forms of reception that might help produce the normative conceptions of so-called sound art that exclude other possible understandings. I argue that a project like the *Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field* is inherently relational, intransitive and encountered in concrete material and discursive contexts. Acknowledging this as a condition for sound and sonic arts practice paves the way for understanding them through the notion of the situation. This enables a perspective where context, artwork and reception can be understood as relational and inseparable. My argument does not offer any resolution to the conflict between the phenomenological and deconstructive approaches but suggests that curatorial engagement with sound should maintain the tension between the two in order to enable descriptive and interpretive frameworks without disabling the possibilities for a critical cultural democracy. This theoretical framework then opens for a mode of reception of artistic work with sound that is performative and looks primarily at what the sounding situation does, how it structures, which forms of cultural repetition it involves, and how it can be understood as embedded within a wider cultural context.

In chapters 5 and 6 I put the theoretical framework developed in the preceding chapters to work in discussions of how the notion of the sounding situation might affect thinking about central museological and curatorial concerns. In the first of these I describe how works like Andreas Führer's *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or?* and practices like Claus Haxholm and Tobias R. Kirstein's *Aggressive Listening* pose fundamental problems for the museum's heritage responsibilities. In particular I discuss how archival practices at art museums as well as current heritage policies are primarily oriented toward tangible objects and their documentation. However, when the artwork is primarily composed as a contingent situation such archival practices need to be reimagined from a perspective of intangible cultural heritage – a notion that art museums at present are unaccustomed and unequipped to work with. By the example of *Aggressive Listening*, which is not necessarily best represented through documentation but rather has to be seen as a performative practice to be enacted, I argue that a lot of contemporary artistic work exists in a grey zone and is likely to fall out of cultural memory unless the archival policies and practices at art museums are revaluated. This is especially the case with practices that do not leave physical traces that can easily enter the economy of spectacle and visibility that presently govern the museum field. As a suggestion to rethink the opposition of heritage and practices, I engage questions of authority traditionally diverted to the museum archive. Here I examine how other conceptions of a more dispersed, networked and virtual archive might affect how practices that do not necessarily produce stable artworks can be safeguarded and sustained. I conclude that curatorial work with the museum archive in relation to intangible sounding practices is an ethical act of balance that demands that art museums both enable such practices and rethink their archival obligations toward them in the light of the present dispersion and networked state of archives.

If the archive and collection is traditionally understood as the foundation of the museum then the exhibition can be described as the museum's default mode of address in relation to its public. In Chapter 6 I examine how the art museum gallery space converges with the sounding situation. I return to the *Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field* and analyse some of the curatorial discussions that went ahead of the exhibition which concluded the project-oriented work. More specifically I address how the conventions of the gallery space, famously theorised by Brian O'Doherty as the white cube (O'Doherty 1976), is renegotiated from the perspective of the sounding situation. The

chapter also continues some of the discussions on sound and listening from Chapter 4 and engages specifically in a critique of immersion that connects equally to the white cube, sound art exhibitions and sound art theory. On the basis of recent critiques of the material turn in sound studies I propose that the understanding of the exhibition as a sounding situation can offer a way to combine matter, sensation and meaning in both discursive and non-discursive domains. The key to this understanding is an acoustemological (Feld 2015) approach that enables us to account for the situatedness and embodiedness of the listener while also acknowledging the fundamental otherness of the artwork in question. The levels of the phenomenal and the discursive that were opposed in Chapter 4 are here combined in an epistemology where sound, sensation, signification and communication are inextricably entwined as a "material-semiotic figuration" (Haraway 1988, 595).

Chapter 7 presents a few concluding remarks and connects some of the concepts developed throughout the dissertation. It adjoins the notion of expediency to the concept of sounding situations and reflects on how the biopolitical perspectives laid out early in the dissertation permeates the everyday routines discussed in the latter parts of the text. In conclusion, I suggest that the concept of the situation as an artistic and curatorial antagonism is necessary for the museum institution in order to escape the generalised forms of dissent implied and reinforced by neoliberal biopolitics.

3. *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or?*

> […] we need to shift our perspective from the transverse relation between objects and images to the longitudinal trajectories of material and awareness. […] everything there is, launched in the current of time, has a trajectory of becoming. The entwining of these ever-extending trajectories comprises the texture of the world. Whether our concern is to inhabit this world or to study it – and at the root these are the same, since all inhabitants are students and all students inhabitants – our task is not to take stock of its contents but to *follow what is going on*, tracing the multiple trails of becoming, wherever they lead. (Ingold 2011, 14)

The cryptic title of this chapter refers to the artwork *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or?* by Andreas Führer, which consists of a map that simultaneously is a score for a piece of music to be performed as a soundwalk in the town of Roskilde (See appendix 1). It is printed on a sheet of A3 size semi-glossed heavy paper and folded like a triptych, both leaves towards the middle. When not opened, the front side of the score shows illustrations for breathing exercises with corresponding hand drawn instructions on the backside. The drawn instructions and the breathing exercises are copied from the Danish translation of Philip Smith's book *Total Breathing* (Smith 1983). Opening up the score, the breathing exercise illustrations are on either side of the instructions. In the lower right corner of the front cover there is a small black logo that states the title of the piece. Inside a small black box, it says with tiny letters in gradient purple: "THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY, D'OR?", and underneath the title in an even smaller font it says "Description". The artist's name does not appear on the score. On the other side of the sheet there is a map of the central part of Roskilde; a screenshot from Google maps with a drawn route in the same purple colour as the title. At the border of the sheet, around the map, there is a quote from Søren Kierkegaard's *Gjentagelsen* [Repetition](Kierkegaard 2001). On the left-hand side of the map there is a verbal description in nine paragraphs giving directions for the walking route, and at the bottom of the sheet there are nine photos taken in rather poor mobile phone quality. The photos and the descriptions correspond and are connected via white lines to designated spots on the map: the places where the audience is instructed to stop and listen. In these places, different kinds of ventilation systems would emit sound.

I commissioned the piece for the 2014 *ACTS Festival for Performative Art*, which was held at the MFSK and at other locations in Roskilde. I have adopted its title as the title for this chapter as a playful recognition of the many entanglements and appropriations

that arise from collaborations, such as the ones I have carried out as part of this project. The title also highlights many of the methodological themes and challenges connected to my mode of collaborative curatorial research, which have been central throughout my research project and become especially visible through my work with Führer's work. Gregory Bateson once said that "we know the territory does not get onto the map. […] What gets onto the map, in fact, is difference" (Bateson 1972, 458). He also suggested that "the word "idea," in its most elementary sense, is synonymous with "difference"" (Bateson, 1972, p. 459). To Bateson there was a sharp distinction between the world of things – as that which was simply 'out there', and the world of phenomena – as the ways in which what is 'out there' appears to us and how we are able to speak about it:

> The territory is *Ding an sich* and you can't do anything with it. Always the process of representation will filter it out so that the mental world is only maps of maps of maps, ad infinitum. All "phenomena" are literally appearances. (Bateson 1972, 461)

Yet he remarked in a footnote (Bateson 1972, 461n7) that all these maps retained in them the relation to a territory as the step always prior to the present map. Representations of representations thus work in the same manner as maps of territories and the relation is one of connection and transformation rather than dissociation and opposition. In this sense, performative repetition and difference also pertain to a notion of mapping as a curatorial research practice, which underpins the present chapter.

By appropriating the title of Führer's work as the title for this chapter, I quite deliberately blur the distinctions between map and territory from the start. This points to the relational and enmeshed mode of knowledge production of my dissertation, as well as to the issues of representation and transformation that run through it on several levels. Führer's piece was commissioned for both the *ACTS* festival and as a part of my research project – the double purpose of this commission has significance for the questions my work has been able to ask, how I have been able to engage with my material, and which answers it has been able to provide. This can be described on two levels. The first relates to my deployment of curating as a research methodology, thus not only setting the scene for the questions I have been able to ask but also how these have changed and evolved during my research. This level is also concerned with the institutional setup of my project as well as the significance and implications of researching by means of collaboration. The second relates mainly to the types of knowledge that my

methodology can provide in this dissertation – how I have been able to write from *within* my curatorial practice. This involves on the one side a reflection within my text on the status and usage of the artworks, projects and collaborations that make up my empirical material. On the other side, it reflects how I have been able to theorize this field in my analyses of the broader discursive and institutional formations that make up the context for my work.

While I do not claim for my curatorial work to be anthropological in any strict disciplinary sense, I have been flirting quite intensively with ideas of curating as a mode of fieldwork and taken certain inspirations from within the discipline of anthropology to serve as extremely useful in describing my research setup and methodology.[15] The anthropologist George E. Marcus has criticised prevalent ideas of ethnographic fieldwork within anthropology for emphasising what he calls the "filmic Malinowskian *mise en scène*" (Marcus 2010, 265): the typical opening pages of standard ethnography, where (admittedly, a little caricatured) the ethnographer arrives at the locality of fieldwork for the very first time, having left the hitherto familiar world behind, and now describes the feeling of strangeness in this encounter with an utterly new place. Marcus' critique stems from the observation that "the *Writing Culture* critique of the 1980s" (Marcus 2010, 264)[16] focused too narrowly on problems of representation related to the anthropological *text*, but did not sufficiently take into account the way that the conditions of the fieldwork on which traditional anthropology was founded had "disintegrated, fragmented or morphed" (Marcus 2010, 265). In relation to my work within this project I

[15] Kirsten Hastrup has written that the anthropologist "*always* has another interest of knowledge compared to the concrete community under study – namely a scholarly anthropological interest" (Hastrup 2003, 12, my translation, original emphasis). In this sense I cannot claim to be doing anthropology, as my subject of research is my own discipline (however multivalent and composite this designation may be) in which I am both a practitioner *in* and a researcher *of* (hence some of the multivalence). While it holds true that I also have another interest of knowledge compared to the subject(s) of my study, the disciplinary distance I produce in my analyses and through my text does not come from a scholarly anthropological interest but rather from critical position within the concrete community I am researching. In other words I have not been able or wanted to establish the disciplinary distance or threshold between researcher and object of study that Hastrup's methodological separation seems to suggest as necessary for work to be properly anthropological.

[16] Marcus himself was a prominent figure in the 1980s revision of anthropology. Most notably by the publication together with James Clifford of *Writing Culture, the poetics and politics of ethnography* (Clifford 1986), and together with Michael M. J. Fischer of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus and Fischer 1999), originally published in 1986, in which the first chapter by its title coins the now widespread trope of "A Crisis of Representation in the Human Sciences."

never really arrived anywhere during my period of curatorial field research. I was already there in the first place and I was at the same time always on the move to somewhere else. Through different subject positions in different contexts. What enables me to state this is the obvious fact that I have been doing fieldwork not just at "at home", but rather *from within* as a practitioner in my own field of research. And as I was studying my field, I gradually entered into a state of becoming a political subject of it as well. This means that my view on the power/knowledge formations within my field is always double. As a curator, I am subjected to them and as a researcher they form an important part of my research object.

This renders the spatial and temporal limits of the research project, let alone its dimension of curating as fieldwork, somewhat fuzzy. When did it start? How do I delimit my field? Where does the territory end and the map take over? How do I even distinguish between map and territory? The point is that I am not able to answer any of these questions in a meaningful way. I did not simply arrive with a ready methodological toolbox to start studying a field with which I was previously unacquainted. Rather, I partly produced the field and the tools to study it *as* my study and I was a practitioner in the field before this research project started. The rather arbitrary delimitation of the field I *have* been able to make is quite simply a pragmatic one: By putting the three different projects I have curated (see page 1) and the contexts they have created and been part of, both inside and outside of the museum, to work as the basis for the dissertation. I am aware that this is a very loose and perhaps haphazard delimitation of a research area, but as I will explain in the following pages, it is the one I have been able to apply to my method of fieldwork due to the composition of the field and my enmeshment within it. As such it calls for another kind of *mise en scène*; one that is not a description of an encounter but rather a clarification of the gradual development of the specific situated and "partial perspective" (Haraway 1988) I have been able to apply to my field of study. This involves a description of my methodological setup and the challenges it poses for my writing as well as it involves a clarification of my fundamental theoretical perspectives. As stated in the introduction, these rely on two intersecting and supplementing views of performativity – a deconstructive approach and a constructive approach.

The situated and partial perspective, I am able to occupy leans on environmental anthropologist Tim Ingold's descriptions of production and inhabitation. For Ingold,

> […] the essence of production lies […] in the attentional quality of the action – that is, in its attunement and responsiveness to the task it unfolds – and in its developmental effects on the producer. (Ingold 2011, 6)

Ingold thus dissolves the contradiction between production and consumption within both classic materialism and culturalism, which in his account would always lead to a closed-circuit representational conundrum where "producing things gives us objects to consume, consuming things gives us ideas of what to produce" (Ingold 2011, 5). Rather, he argues, production should be understood "*intransitively*, not as a transitive relation of image to object" (Ingold 2011, 6). While Ingold's reading of Marx can be rightly critiqued for neglecting the logic of the political economy of the market in which production is understood as means to achieve a predefined end, it does open up an understanding of production as inherently processual that, as we shall see, is useful in relation to curatorial work with commissions where the end product is never quite defined from the outset. The notion of intransitivity, which I employ throughout most of the dissertation, is also applicable to much artistic work with sound. Ingold also contrasts a notion of dwelling with building and architecture as another example of the difference between intransitive and transitive "senses of production" (Ingold 2011, 9). The idea of building is found in architecture and is aligned with design as something being prior to construction – that is as a transitive process, whereas dwelling "is about the way inhabitants, singly, and together, produce their own lives, and like life, it carries on" (Ingold 2011, 9-10).[17] Dwelling, or inhabitation as Ingold seems to gradually develop and prefer throughout the book,[18] is then also about how we perceive and feel attached to our

[17] This is essentially a Heideggerian point (Ingold refers to the essay "Building Dwelling Thinking" in (Heidegger 1971)). However, Heidegger would emphasise the difference between existing and being, the anthropocentric implications of which Ingold goes on to discuss as they are at odds with his point that dwelling pertains equally to human and non-human living beings. This forms part of the same critique of a transcendental subject, which Ingold voices in his discussion of Marxist philosophy of history (Ingold 2011, 6-9). He contrasts Heidegger with James Gibson's theories of affordance (Gibson 1979) from which he takes the idea that perception does not presuppose a Cartesian split between mind and body but rather is about the movement of the whole organism through an environment where what is perceived are not things in their essence, "but what they afford for the pursuance of its [the organism's] current activity (Ingold 2011, 11). To Ingold, Heidegger's in-der-Welt-sein and Gibson's idea of habitation as the perception of an organism in an environment become more or less "ontologically equivalent" (Ingold 2011, 11).

[18] For Ingold, dwelling implies a strong sense of place due to the term's Heideggerian heritage developed as an opening or clearing only available for humans, whereas inhabitation seems to connote a more mobile way of being involved with an environment. This is developed through his reading of Merleau-Ponty from which he concludes that "the living body is primordially

environment and how we move through it. There is an underlying theme of movement that runs through Ingold's thinking that also pertains to his concept of inhabitation and his definition of what it means to dwell:

> It is, literally to be embarked upon a movement along a way of life. The perceiver-producer is thus a wayfarer, and the mode of production is itself a trail blazed or a path followed. (Ingold 2011, 12)

Ingold perceives this idea of inhabitation as a movement along "a bundle of lines" (Ingold 2011, 13) that form "not a network but a meshwork" (Ingold 2011, 84) and it is this sense of meshwork, which he defines "not as *text* but as *texture*" (Ingold 2011, 84) that he seeks to operationalise in his descriptions. This means that relations are not between things but rather along lines of intransitive production and dwelling. This essentially Deleuzian figure of thought[19] describes the changing subject positions I have been able to inhabit during this project quite well, and as such it remains a backdrop for the present chapter. While the figures of intransitivity and inhabitation are able to describe the practical context of my curatorial work, the texture or meshwork constitutes the analytical object of this dissertation – the object of its critique. As such, my own enmeshment within the field calls for a clarification of its intersecting points within the institutional and discursive landscape in order to identify a critical position within this practical context.

Research environment

The institutional context and working environment of my research project has offered a certain set of opportunities for me to do work and by implication excluded other types of possible work that did not fit into this framework. Not being an employee of the museum during the PhD research period, I was able to work without any formal or practical obligations besides the timely completion of my work. The projects I have carried out have either been by my own suggestions or, as in the case of the *ACTS* festival, by invitation from the museum to be part of the curatorial team for the festival.

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and irrevocably stitched into the fabric of the world, our perception of the world is no more, and no less, than the world's perception of itself – in and through us" (Ingold 2011, 12).

19 Tim Ingold borrows the term from Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1991), but uses it to designate a Deleuzian *hacceity* (Ingold 2011, 84-86), described by the figure of the rhizome as put forward in A Thousand Plateaus (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 3-28) by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

In this sense my relation to the museum has been somewhat parasitic[20] and I have both practically and conceptually depended deeply on the institutional support offered by its framework. On a practical level I have depended on the museum as an infrastructural platform to realise my projects in terms of funding, location, timing, technical support, access to the public, PR and communication. This position has allowed me to conduct my curatorial projects according to my research interests. While the framework offered for my research by the MFSK has been generously open to experimentation in both form and content and I have been given a free role at the museum, it also presented certain constraints as my research plan had to be fitted to the museum's overall programming. A lot was given in advance by the fact that I chose to work solely with one institution. Because of the small size of the institution[21] as well as the long-term perspectives of exhibition planning, I had to more or less latch onto existing or already-planned activities[22] – or to plan my activities around the main exhibition programme[23] – in order to realise my research. As such, the power and agency to freely produce connections and the elevation of the curator's social status gained by such free authoring, which for instance Beatrice von Bismarck has ascribed to the freelance curator (von Bismarck 2007), has not applied entirely to my situation.

[20] This means that I have not been necessary for the MFSK to perform the task of being a museum of contemporary art, and for that reason I have largely been able to perform my curatorial inquiries along the lines of a freelance curator.

[21] When I commenced this research the permanently employed full-time staff comprised the museum director, an administrator and three curators respectively in charge of collections & research, learning & education, and public programming, communication & exhibition production. Then director Sanne Kofod Olsen curated many of the exhibitions herself, as did her predecessor Marianne Bech. The present director, Birgitte Kirkhoff Eriksen has delegated the curatorial responsibility mainly to the curator in charge of collections but in close collaboration with the entire team. As to the physical size of the museum, the main exhibition building consists of eight smaller galleries on two separate floors. The layout of the building and the galleries make it very difficult to install more than two separate exhibitions at a time (one on each floor). At the time of writing there is a collection show on the ground floor while the first floor houses temporary exhibitions.

[22] This was the case both with the biannual *ACTS* 2014 festival and the exhibition *Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.*, which was planned for the museum's 25th anniversary.

[23] This was the case with *The Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field* where we worked outside of the museum for parts of the project and installed the final exhibition in the Husarstalden gallery space. This space is located in an unheated former stable building across the yard from the museum's main exhibition spaces.

The fragility of the construction was highlighted when the museum got a new director by the end of 2014, a little over a year into my project. In this situation I had to reconfirm and renegotiate the projects I had been planning and adjust my overall project design accordingly. Even if the temporal and structural distribution of my planned projects did not change significantly, it did however change my perspectives and research questions since the change of directors also involved a redefinition of the museum's purpose and mission. Additionally, the curator I was originally supposed to collaborate with on the 25th anniversary exhibition eventually got fired from the museum as a consequence of cutbacks during this transition. This meant that the thematic scope and content of the exhibition was once again open to negotiation in a context that was completely unforeseen in my initial research design. While I will return to this change in the institutional outlook in more depth in the following chapter, I would like already at this stage to make the point that the institution, on the basis of which I had formulated my research, changed significantly during the period of this research. Given that my curatorial projects would have to somehow fit into the existing profile and programming at the museum, and given that I needed to maintain the goodwill of the shifting museum management in order to be able to carry out my research, I have worked under conditions reminiscent of an institutional operator moreso than those of a freelance curator.[24]

Regarding the relation between the position I am able to inhabit as a curator in this changing landscape and my research interests, it is also important to note that my research project was initially formulated on the background of, and in response to, work I had previously done at the MFSK. This institutional and discursive backdrop is important, not so much because it has delimited the scope of what I was able to do but because it delimited what I was able to imagine. As such it played a decisive role in generating my research questions and research design. As stated in the introduction, there is a history at the MFSK of the institutionalisation of contemporary art together with a special focus on sounding and other ephemeral practices that have challenged the idea of the artwork as a delimitable object that could be institutionalised. The original self-critical impulse of both avant-garde ethics and new institutionalism (as well as the participatory and dialogic initiatives already mentioned in the introduction) have sat

[24] Additionally I have been employed as a postdoctoral project researcher at the museum subsequent to my PhD fieldwork.

comfortably within the MFSK, as a museum that since its inception has been open to challenging "not only the limited discourse of the work of art as a mere object, but also the whole institutional framework that went with it" (Ekeberg 2006, 9). My attachment to this particular institution has thus been important in developing my critical perspectives regarding what it means to be a museum of contemporary art in the 21st century. In this work my role as a quasi-independent/quasi-institutional operator has allowed for an investigation of formats and content at a museum where institutional critique and reflexivity has been part and parcel with its foundation and self-understanding from the outset (Bech 2016). Recalling Tim Ingold, my research project has in this sense been both a "path followed" (Ingold 2011, 12) as a mode of production that has been very much determined by the institutional environment I was working in, as well as "a trail blazed" (Ingold 2011, 12) since I have been interested in critically challenging structures within this environment. These are questions that I take up in the chapters that follow where I also engage in more theoretical depth with deconstructing the institutional contexts of my work, both in relation to the museum institution and to instituted discourses on so called sound art.

Setting up the lab

The general methodological gesture of my inquiries throughout the practical part of my research has been the commission of projects and artworks. I have employed this gesture intransitively in the sense described by Ingold (Ingold 2011, 6), meaning that my emphasis has been on the processual elements rather than on the products ensuing from these commissions. I have employed the commission as a methodology in order to work from *within* curatorial practice instead of looking at it from a distance. However, it was not given from the start that commissioning artworks would necessarily be my preferred curatorial mode of operation. On the contrary, I could as easily have started from the archive and moved outwards in a continuation of work I had previously done with the museum collection and archive. To a certain extent this became the case with the exhibition *Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.* (which, coincidentally, also became the final project during my period of fieldwork and which ended up commissioning five artists to engage curatorially with the museum). However, the choices that led me to adopt the commission as a general mode of inquiry were motivated by a wish to engage with contemporary artistic practice and the museum in one and the same gesture. Partly because I felt a strong need to extend and discuss my questions within a wider circle of

interlocutors, including other kinds of practitioners – and partly because I wanted to investigate the processual and relational elements of museum practice from the intransitive perspective of sound. Working through commissions, my mode of address was not intended to be an attempt to exhibit, illustrate or otherwise display a specific curatorial agenda to an imagined or real public. While only realising this after the conclusion of my fieldwork, such a curatorial strategy would partly lend itself to ideas of transitivity. As a research strategy I was not interested to "show and tell" (Bennett 1988, 99), rather I ventured into the project to intransitively examine *how* certain museological concerns would let themselves be addressed through my practice of curating, with a specific focus on how sonic art practices might construct the museum and my research in a broader socio-economic context. To put it bluntly, I was more interested in the processes, workings, and implications *of* show and tell than I was in showing and telling by way of presenting products – even if as a curator I at all times was obliged to realise the products ensuing from my projects in the best possible way.

According to Creativity and Cognition Studios (CCS) at University of Technology in Sydney, the idea of doing practice-led research[25] should be to "advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice", which has "operational significance for that practice" and further, includes "practice as an integral part of its method" (CCS). While this is probably a fairly accurate description in my case, I would like to emphasise that it has been important for me to generate knowledge *through* and *along* my practice and not just as an integral part of a research method. For a research practice that works by commissioning artworks or project based work this means entrusting the artists and other partners I have been collaborating with throughout my research with the capacity to fundamentally change the perspectives of my research by bringing new positions to the table; by taking the research in other, non-predicted directions. On the one hand, while this would seem to be the entire *raison d'être* of commissioning artists to participate in my research: that the research questions are expanded to resonate with another sphere from which they gain new pertinence, perspectives and relevance – on the other hand, it poses important questions about who controls the research process if not the researcher. The term practice-led research obviously suggests

[25] For a definition of practice-led research (as opposed to practice-based research) see https://www.creativityandcognition.com/research/practice-based-research/differences-between-practice-based-and-practice-led-research/ (Accessed March 1, 2017).

an active engagement with practice, and with that comes an entanglement in the political economies of the field of practice: At the same time as my research has been anchored at the university, I have been committed to specific deliverables at the museum (a festival, a participatory project, two exhibitions) at specified points independent of the anchorage of my research at the university. The often-supposed split between the detached researcher and the entangled practitioner has in my case been non-sustainable from the start. This is another reason why the two complementary concepts of performativity, the deconstructive and the constructive, have been necessary. Evidently, I participate in the very knowledge economy that I am analysing and critiquing by undertaking its dominant form of "immaterial labor," defined by Maurizio Lazzarato as "the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity"" (Lazzarato 1996, 133 quoted after Manning and Massumi 2014, 84). For Erin Manning and Brian Massumi such entwinement of academic research and the creative economy has "created real opportunities – but also highly troubling alignments with the neoliberal economy" (Manning and Massumi 2014, 84). They analyse this situation through the concept of "research-creation"[26] (Manning and Massumi 2014, 84), a term meant to "encourage hybrid forms of activity" (Manning and Massumi 2014, 84) in an interdisciplinary field between art practice and academia. However, they also note that research-creation implies that art is at risk of being formatted "for more directly economic forms of delivery to stakeholders", meaning that it might serve dominant tendencies within the academy "toward capitalizing creative activity" (Manning and Massumi 2014, 85). In order to avoid such instrumentalisation, Manning and Massumi emphasise experimental creative processes of exploration across disciplines in which the outcomes are not pre-established, or where the processes remain intransitive in the sense employed by Ingold. Researching by way of commissioning new work as part of a curatorial practice can thus be understood as an intransitive, cross-disciplinary mode of research-creation that places itself precisely between practice and research.

In order to emphasise this intransitivity and experimental methodology in my research design, I have used the metaphor of the laboratory to describe my curatorial projects. I have not envisioned this as a strictly scientific setup made to test whether, under certain

[26] The term was originally employed by The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to designate a new category of research funding, which was introduced in 2003 and made permanent in 2010-11.

controlled conditions, specific theses would be proven or not. Such certain controlled conditions are not realisable if the boundaries of the laboratory are porous, if inside and outside are not clearly separated and spill over into one another. This is obviously the case when research is interdisciplinary and collaborative – and when it partakes directly in the economy that it is simultaneously researching by producing artwork for consumption within it. In this situation external agencies become far too influential and ideas of controlled conditions become contingent upon power/knowledge configurations and codes of conduct outside of the control of the researcher: As well as I have my own research agenda, the museum has a wish to present stuff to the public in a certain frame, under certain conditions and at a certain time, just as the artists need to present work according to their ideas, their other projects and the economies they participate in. As such, the power relations within my empirical field have greatly affected what I was able to realise and the questions I was able to ask of my material. In taking the element of practice seriously I have allowed all of these external agencies to influence the research, at times steering my interests and focus in new directions and sparking a need for a certain amount of practical improvisation that in turn generated new contexts for my research. The reason I chose the metaphor of the laboratory had more to do with its connotations as a space for learning in an open, inquisitive and experimental environment,[27] a place where I would be able to merely follow my material. In this sense my methods have been comparable to what George E. Marcus identified as multi-sited ethnography.

> […] this mobile ethnography takes unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity that destabilize the distinction, for example, between lifeworld and system […] It may begin in the world system, but because of the way it evolves its object of study, this mode [of ethnography] comes circumstantially to be of the world system as well. (Marcus 1995, 96)

For Marcus, multi-sited ethnography has at its heart "strategies of quite literally following connections, associations, and putative relationships" (Marcus 1995, 97). This in

[27] My usage of the term experimental is also greatly indebted to the definition made by John Cage in his essay "Experimental Music: Doctrine": "Where […] attention moves towards the observation and audition of many things at once, including those that are environmental—becomes, that is, inclusive rather than exclusive—no question of making, in the sense of forming understandable structures, can arise (one is tourist), and here the word "experimental" is apt, providing it is understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as of an act the outcome of which is unknown. What has been determined?" (Cage 2004, 13).

itself is not very far from classical hermeneutics where meaning is constructed in a constant movement between interpreter and interpreted. However, for Marcus the crucial difference is that

> multi-sited ethnography is always conducted with a keen awareness of being within the landscape, and as the landscape changes across sites, the identity of the ethnographer requires renegotiation. (Marcus 1995, 113)

Rather than trying to factor out the contingencies that affect my project, I have employed the idea of the laboratory as the opposite. Derived from the word's Latin root, *laborare*, the laboratory is literally a place to work. More than an easily delimited ontological or epistemological space, in my case of practice-led curatorial research this place is closer to a topology with multiple sites, levels, discourses, temporalities, and, above all, contingency and movement of both researcher and researched. This corresponds to Marcus' more recent descriptions of collaborative fieldwork, where

> […] the scene of fieldwork today has two key features – working, committed collaborations, and the understanding of imaginaries and their consequences as both the major impetus by which ethnography becomes multi-sited and the medium by which ethnography defines its conceptual and empirical object. (Marcus 2010, 268)

It is in this sense that my curatorial methodology has been close to that of anthropologically inspired ethnographic fieldwork, since it has been highly based on working with others and committed collaborations with both artists and museum in the construction of its conceptual and empirical object.

Working with contingencies

The commission of *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or?* by Andreas Führer is an example of such a committed collaboration, which raised a number of concerns regarding my position as a curator *and* researcher in relation to my empirical field and materials. I had made the commission for the *ACTS* festival that was held on a warm weekend in June 2014. But in fact one can walk the route designated in Führer's score at any time of the year, in any weather, day or night. Perhaps some sounds will be missing but then others will come to the forefront without the piece being altered significantly.[28] The

[28] The score specifies nine locations in which the performer is instructed to stop and listen attentively. At these locations sounds from various ventilation systems are in the foreground of the listening experience. Führer has described the work as a piece of music inside of which you can walk around. To this he added that he needed to be certain that the sounds would be there continuously in order for the optimum experience (Holmboe and Stricker 2016). However, I have walked the route a couple of times where a few of the ventilation systems had been

piece as such is quite resistant and does not *need* the festival or any other curatorial framing or introduction in order for someone to perform it. It can be done at any time as long as you have the score at hand and an hour to spare. However, due to my initial framing of the piece within the format of the festival and as a consequence of the tight scheduling of the other performances, I was afraid that the audience would not find the time to engage in the duration of the walk, which is around one hour if you also engage in the breathing exercises specified on the map's flipside. For this reason we decided to announce a collective walk starting at 5 p.m. during the intermission between the day programme and the evening programme. When speaking about this collective walk in the morning Andreas had called it the tourist tour (Field notes, June 14, 2014).[29] He did not mean that in any derogative way, but he did not want to take part in it himself as he did not want to impose his own intentions or interpretations on the participants. People should engage with the piece in any way they preferred themselves without interference by the presence of the artist. He did not want it to be a guided tour of the artwork (Field notes, June 14, 2014). Führer gave the explanation that whatever he might have thought while creating the piece was irrelevant to the audience now that it was finished and the score was there for them to engage with (Field notes, June 14, 2014). Later in the evening he elaborated on this in relation to a performance by Leif Elggren saying that he liked it because

> […] it is just there and it is easy to understand because no one tells you what to understand. It is an offer and an expression that you can

switched off. To me, that did not alter the overall experience of the piece significantly. Rather it added other and new layers and nuances. More significant changes have been the time of day, the weather, or the season, which all dramatically alters the soundscape of the piece. I would contend that this tells us that his need for the ventilation systems to be on was for them to provide a convincing *conceptual* form for the piece giving the listener a reason to stop and listen at the precisely designated points. Once this reason has been established in and accepted by the listener, it is of lesser importance whether the ventilation system in question is in fact on or not. Here, I presuppose that the act of listening is more important for the piece than the concrete sound actually listened to, which I admit is entirely my interpretation.

[29] Throughout the project I have employed various methods of collecting data. I have used field notes as a tool to aid memory as well as to reflect on events. Whenever I make use of them in the dissertation I cite by date and do not put statements made by others in quotation marks as they are my own paraphrases and recollections of conversations. I have also made quite a few audio recordings of conversations and events. Whenever these are cited or paraphrased I refer to them by date. Additionally I have conducted three more structured interviews that are referenced in text and appear in the bibliography. Email correspondences and other material (e.g. posters and press releases for projects) is also referenced directly in the text throughout the dissertation but not listed in the bibliography. Webpages and online material is referenced in the footnotes but does not appear on the bibliography.

> take in, but there is no one telling you how to do it. (Field notes, June 14, 2014)

This expresses a view reminiscent of Susan Sontag's famous credo that art should not be violated by interpretation, that it is not in need of such translation and that it offers a primary form of sensibility that interpretation only tries to transgress, destroy or substitute for itself "when it digs "behind" the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one" (Sontag 1994, 6) as she put it. I admit that in all its anachronism this description is too crude and does not do justice to Führer's thinking and artwork. However, at this point it is sufficient to make my case.

At this early stage of my fieldwork, a central part of my research design was concerned with the relation between sound, performance and the archive. One of my main objectives were to try to develop better ways of documenting sound performances. This horizon had been the reason for me to commission a performance by Führer for the *ACTS* festival as well as for my research project. I had invited him on the basis of a conversation we had one night in spring 2013 while walking home from a concert.[30] At this point I had just been told that I had been awarded the PhD scholarship and I was trying to explain to him what my research interests were. I remember that in reply to my at this point probably rather feeble description of the project he said that he was more interested in work that documented itself than the documentation of work.[31] At the time I found this an intriguing proposition eventhough I do not think I had yet realised what he might have meant by it. Several informal conversations followed this and in the fall of 2013, I was asked to propose artists for the funding application for the *ACTS* festival so I contacted Führer in order to examine the potential of his ideas through the commission of a work for the festival. In the period before the festival when he was doing research for the piece, I had been walking around Roskilde with him on several occasions recording our conversations. I had been interested in his way of thinking, his process, and how he would arrive at the final work because I thought that it would improve

[30] Andreas and I come from the same town where his mother used to own the local record store in which two of my best friends and bandmates worked. I have known him since my early twenties, when he was a teenager occasionally filling in a shift in the store. During the latter part of the 2000s and into the 10s, I have increasingly followed and been interested in his artistic practice and the scene that he has formed part of, which is centred around the musicians'/artists' collective yoyooyoy and also, from 2010, around the venue Mayhem in Copenhagen.

[31] This is purely anecdotal and not supported by field notes or other documentation. At this time I did not consider my project to already have started.

my ability to generate good or appropriate documentation (as well as to present the work to an audience). In other words I wanted to know, in a rather classical hermeneutical way, as much as possible about the work in order to better 'understand' what was beneath its surface.

As it turned out, the commission evolved into this score for a soundwalk that anyone can just do themselves. As a musical score it can be considered both as a text inviting philological interpretation and as prescriptive device specifying and requiring a certain set of actions to be performed (Dahlhaus 1989, 8-15, 1965). It should be obvious that depending on whether you choose to base your analysis on the text or on the performance the outcomes will differ vastly (Cook 1999, 2012, Worthen 2007). Even moreso since the audience were the performers of the piece. What would be the focus for the documenting and analytic effort? I could have documented how people engaged with the piece – and I was to some extent interested in how people would do that, if for nothing else to gain a more thorough understanding inclusive of other perspectives than my own. Yet collecting information of peoples' experiences and interpretations of *their* performances of the piece was beside the point. As Führer suggested the score could speak for itself and no further information was needed for its performance. This opinion undermined the claim that performance should be antithetical to the archive because of its ephemerality and disappearance (Reason 2006, Schneider 2011, Phelan 1993). And thus it also undermined my interests in documenting that had sprung from this claim. Any attempts at documenting concrete performances of the piece would somehow run counter to his idea that the beauty of it was that it was there for anyone to engage with. And as he said, no one was telling you how to understand it (Field notes, June 14, 2014).

As the trained musicologist that I am, I started reading the score to see what hidden layers and references he had put in there for me to excavate. There were quite a lot but it almost goes without saying that most of them were there not as a consequence of the score but rather as a consequence of me, the reader, the knowledge I had, and the framing I had already imposed on the piece. They were my own highly performative readings influenced by my own research interests and the conversations and email correspondence we had been having. While such readings would probably be of interest to some, by putting them forward from my position as the curator would I not, compromise my curatorial obligations towards Andreas and his work – and by implication towards the audience as well? Would my readings not impose possible hermeneutical

closures to a work that he essentially wanted to keep open? In fact by withdrawing his authorly intention and foregrounding the work's self-sufficiency Andreas had answered my claim that performance was somehow in need of being documented by making that claim irrelevant or obsolete. In this way his work produced a conflict between my original research interests and my curatorial obligations. Whether or not I subscribe to his ideas that interpretation destroys the artwork, becomes irrelevant because my position compelled me to at least partly comply with the artist's wish to not contextualise the piece too much. He had in fact made a piece that was somehow immune to my desire for documentation, thus in effect showing how any act of documenting (or interpretation, whether by philological or performative impetus) is always a performance too. As Philip Auslander has rightly argued, documenting is in itself performative and as such acts of documenting participate greatly in the framing of performance art *as* performance art (Auslander 2006). In the case of Führer's score this would definitely have been the case had I continued to develop my initial focus on documentation – the point being that the position of the documentarist as well as that of the interpreter were not really available to me as a consequence of his artistic choices relative to the commission I had given him. The representational relationship between map and territory was not only thematised *within* the work, where Bateson's claim in a sense is turned upside down as the map (or score) is transformed into a precondition for experiencing the territory. It also surfaced as a consequence of our collaboration where any representational acts of documenting, contextualising or writing, of mapping the territory so to speak, became complicated due to the way he conceived the work as self-sufficient.

Perhaps the addition of the small "D'Or?" to Korzybski's[32] (Bateson 1972, 455) original phrasing can be read as a complication of, or a pun on, the temporal and causal hierarchies between map and territory that Bateson's rendition of the problem seems to suggest. Hierarchies that were also inherent to my initial claim that performance would be in the need of documentation. This idea is, as Rebecca Schneider has pointed out, not intrinsic to performance itself but rather a consequence of the archive:

> If we consider performance as "of" disappearance, if we think of the ephemeral as that which "vanishes" and if we think of performance as the antithesis of preservation, do we limit ourselves to an understanding of performance predetermined by cultural habituation to the

[32] The phrase "The map is not the territory" was originally coined by the Polish mathematician and philosopher Alfred Korzybski (1879-1950).

> patrilineal, West-identified (arguably white-cultural) logic of the archive? (Schneider 2011, 97)

In this light it was my preoccupation as a museum professional with archives that had made the claim that performance was in need of documentation. From Führer's perspective as a musician, composer and artist, this needed not be the case and perhaps his answering my commission with this piece was a playful way of rendering my questions somewhat irrelevant in connection to his practice. The addition of the "D'Or?" itself is syntactically highly ambivalent. Whether it is taken to mean that 'the map is not the territory, as-of-gold?', or as a visual suffix which the comma might seem to suggest 'the map is not the territory, golden?', or as a more general questioning (by the insertion of the "Or?") of the relations between maps and territories, it seems to suggest one way or the other that the relation between map and territory is at best very blurred. It might even be understood as a reversal: that the map also has potential as a territory of its own and that mental representations might actually affect and reinscribe themselves onto territories. But this is of course purely speculative. I do not even know whether the title came from Führer's reading of Bateson or if he picked it up somewhere else, perhaps directly from Korzybski. And in fact, now I am probably already interpreting in ways that might put closure to the openness with which Führer wanted the piece to be presented, and to which I tacitly agreed by entering into a committed collaboration in the form of a curatorial commission.

Curating

Before returning to the implications of writing about my curatorial practice from the perspective of committed collaborations, a few more general reflections on curating as such are needed. Acknowledging that curating is a diverse and creative practice, the German art historian Dorothea von Hantelmann has stated that the core of curatorial activity is "the act of selection", identifying the exhibition as "a narrative written by curatorial choices" (von Hantelmann 2012, 43-44). Through the power to include artworks and artists into exhibitions (and by implication to exclude others), the curator is here seen as a cultural producer who, by this active discrimination, is central to the construction of artistic canons. In other words the curator enters the economic circuit (symbolic and real) which previously seemed to be the province of the art critic, the patron and the art collector among others (Olsen 2011, 71). von Hantelmann defines curatorial choice (and in a broader socioeconomic sense consumer choice) as the *pro-*

duction of meaning through consumption. By this emphasis she supports the construction of two very powerful tropes within curatorial discourse. Namely those of curator-as-author and exhibition-as-narrative.[33] This has also been observed by Paul O'Neill as a gradual change of the role of the curator since the 1920s and more profoundly since the 1960s where curatorial practice has become a specific mode of cultural production in its own right. O'Neill identifies a shift of focus from the traditional museum "curator-as-carer, working with collections out of sight of the public" (O'Neill 2012, 9) to the newer figure of the independent curator-as-author who occupies "a more central position on a much broader stage" (O'Neill 2012, 9).[34]

It goes without saying that I cannot deny the power of the curatorial choice that I have exercised by way of selecting the artists I wanted to work with and creating and bringing them into the context I was working in. Neither can I contradict the fact that this context can be read by way of exhibition analysis and that as such it is a curatorial statement on my behalf. But the model of curator-as-author/exhibition-as-narrative does not sufficiently describe what I have been interested in examining within my research project. By emphasising the aspect of selection, von Hantelmann's account easily falls prey to a depiction of curatorship as a "reactive profession" (Larsen and Andreasen 2007, 25), one that presupposes and implies the "orthodoxies that determine the artistic function as being primary" (Larsen and Andreasen 2007, 25) within cultural production.[35] To

[33] With a slightly different emphasis this resembles Beatrice von Bismarck's definition of curating as fundamentally a "constellational activity" (von Bismarck and Rogoff 2012, 24), where cultural meaning is generated and renewed by putting stuff together that were previously apart. See also (Groys 2008, 43-52, Sheikh 2011) for discussions of curatorship as a narrative practice.

[34] The figure of the curator-as-author is as easily ascribed to the traditional museum curator as the author-of-collections (Groys 2008, 51). This curator is the person who evaluates and selects what can be included in or excluded from the museum collection as well as how it is contextualised and documented, e.g. through archival and registration practice. In Danish this distinction can seem even clearer as curator translates to 'kurator', whereas the traditional museum curator is called a 'museumsinspektør'. 'Kurator' primarily designates people in charge of an exhibition (who may of course at the same time be 'museumsinspektør') but the derived verb 'at kuratere' does not normally designate all the other tasks that make up jobs of museum curators, such as the care for the collections, research, education, communication etc. etc. The term 'kurator' in the meaning of exhibition maker was not put into widespread use in Danish until the mid-1990s. (Olsen 2011, 12-13) Prior to this the term 'kurator' was originally used to designate an attorney of law (or the like) appointed to liquidate the estate of a deceased person of a bankrupt company.

[35] By implication, this view partly undermines von Hantelmann's own argument because the powerful agency of choice that she ascribes to the curator presupposes that there is actually something to choose from – artists, artworks, positions etc. Seeing curatorial choice as the foun-

describe the nature of my curatorial work and its relations to artists and institution as well as to my dissertation, I would rather go by the somewhat ambivalent figure of "the middleman" suggested by Søren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen as "a conformist, parasitical agent, [who] has an opaque presence in social space" (Larsen and Andreasen 2007, 20), and who can further be described by a "supplementary subjectivity or a subject who is out of place" (Larsen and Andreasen 2007, 22). This proposition complicates the idea of the curator position as supposedly reactive in the production of cultural meaning. However, shifting the focus from producer to intermediary does not mean bypassing questions of curatorial power or exhibitionary show and tell. As stated, the term is ambivalent and it is probably best used as an analytic tool rather than a description of a certain curator-typology. As an analytic tool it enables me to analyse my own position through the construction of it as a relational subjectivity. For Andreasen and Larsen curatorship involves mediation-as-production on multiple levels, not only between artist/artwork and audience/spectator as in the German term "Vermittlung, which signifies mediation in the sense of interpreting a given object with a view to communicating it" (Larsen and Andreasen 2007, 22), but in a more pervasive sense of controlling access to the market (i.e. mediating between institutions, funding bodies, discourses, places, spaces, politics, people, dominant modes of practice and reception, let alone all the other stuff, contingent on the concrete contexts, that needs to be aligned for a curatorial project to happen). As such they inscribe the curator as the central agent in the logic of the art market's cultural capitalism noting that despite the upsurge in literature on curators and their projects there have been "only few examples of rigorous discourse on curating" (Larsen and Andreasen 2007, 26). This causes them to suggest that we might push questions of what a curator is in the direction of looking at agency and subjectivity:

> 'What is a curator?' It is a question that doesn't make sense, because the curator is not something; the curator does something. There is no

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dation of the production of all meaning then only makes sense in a very simplistic and somewhat traditional conception of curatorial activity as the selection and presentation of existing artworks for an exhibition. Her view also positions the exhibition as exemplary – almost as if in a modernist vacuum where the institutional conditions, funding structures, professional relations and other considerations of everyday curating become more or less invisible alongside all those curatorial projects that are not exhibitions. Furthermore, this conception does not pay attention to notions of relevance to the public or the expediency of culture that I develop in the next chapter as powerful discourses, especially within the museum community. As such, these discourses affect curatorial choice to a degree, which renders von Hantelmann's argument somewhat simplistic if not anachronistic.

> ontology of the middleman: she is a performative and exemplary agent, acquiring subjectivity in and by the act of mediation. (Larsen and Andreasen 2007, 26)

The idea of the middleman enables an analytic shift of focus from product to process, from the object-based to the concept-based (Olsen 2011, 79), from the authorial to the relational, from knowledge dissemination to knowledge production, and from representation to performativity. In this sense curatorship can be understood as a becoming from the middle, so to speak – and as such, the idea of the emergent subject of the middleman can also be described with reference to Isabelle Stengers' proposition of an "ecology of practises as a tool for thinking" (Stengers 2005, 186), which I will elaborate on in a moment.

However, I need to address the activity of commissioning in more detail. As Trine Friis Sørensen[36] (Friis Sørensen 2014) has argued, there is a huge difference between the "constellational activity" (von Bismarck and Rogoff 2012, 24) of selecting existing work for an exhibition and commissioning new work as part of a research project. This distinction relates to the differing definitions of curatorship as expressed by the dichotomies listed above. While selection can surely be understood as production its reactive elements are also closely related to ideas of representation. Within this frame commissioning can be seen as a more radical constructivist approach because the outcome of the commission cannot be known in advance. By extending an invitation for artists to participate in research the curator makes herself dependent on the artists for the project to be realised, which makes the power relation reciprocal. Friis Sørensen develops the notion of the commission alongside a rehabilitation within curatorial discourse of the etymological meaning of the verb to curate, to care. Her main point is that such projects enact a co-dependency where the curator provides the opportunity, financial means and occasion for work to be realised by the artist, but is in turn dependent on the artist to enter into the collaboration as well as on the result that this collaboration engenders. For this co-dependency to flourish, curatorial care in Friis Sørensen's view is central

[36] This chapter's focus on the commission is indebted to Trine Friis Sørensen's work and the many conversations we had during her employment at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at UCHP where we for a period shared an office space. Not only am I grateful for the curatorial experience that she generously shared with me over the years. I have also taken great inspiration from her regarding my research design where my mode of inquiry through commissioning has been greatly inspired by her work with the dissertation *We Can (Not) Work It Out* (Friis Sørensen 2014).

for the success of any project involving commissioning of new work. In her article "A Precarious Construct: The Commission as a Curatorial Mode of Inquiry" (Friis Sørensen 2016) she reflects on how the commission is an exercise of curatorial authority by way of offering the artist the opportunity to work and an infrastructure to present work within. At the same time the commission also works as a curatorial act of disempowering and entrustment on behalf of the curator, by way of delegating a specific task to the artist, the fulfilment of which satisfies a specific (research) need for the curator (Friis Sørensen 2016, 87). In this way the commission engenders reciprocity and mutual dependence once the artist takes on the task of fulfilling the need expressed through the commission that delegates authority and empowers "the artist to respond to a need that the commissioner cannot manage single-handedly" (Friis Sørensen 2014, 86). With reference to Maria Lind (Lind 2009), Friis Sørensen stresses the collaborative and co-creative sides of such curatorial research and it is exactly here that the idea of the middleman as a relational subjectivity emerging through curating seems relevant for my research. Obviously power relations are at play within curatorial projects. The point is that they do not only pertain to the curatorial exercise of power through selection, constellation and contextualisation, rather they also work through the artists' response to the commission on which the curator depends. Reciprocally – co-creation becomes co-dependence as the commission engenders a contractual relation or, as it were, a committed collaboration.

As such the artistic resistance or antagonisms within the singular projects I have curated, posed both by the artists and their work, have been instrumental to the way my research project has developed and how I have been able to write the dissertation. The choice of artists to work with has been guided by a certain sense of reactiveness with regards to their pre-existing work as indicative of whether it would be fruitful to enter into a collaboration. However, the reciprocity of the commission as a mode of research has also called for responsiveness to situations where my original intentions or inclinations were challenged, made obsolete or downright disagreed with by my collaborators. This points to the idea of the middleman as not only an intermediary who controls access to and knows the laws of the marketplace, but as someone who is far more actively entangled in the discursive construction of power/knowledge within this marketplace than the notion of mediation seems to suggest.

In an important addendum to the Danish translation of the text (Larsen and Andreasen 2011), Andreasen and Larsen retract some of their initial celebration of the idea of the curator as an intermediary or mediator. Here they contend that looking at mediation not as a choice but as a condition for agency per se is at risk of universalising the concept and making all of its surroundings, but not itself, subject to potential change. That is to say the "materiality of mediation replaces the materiality, which is mediated" (Larsen and Andreasen 2011, 66, my translation). Accordingly, mediation is equivalent to the exercise of power through a given medium (e.g. art, mass media, institutions etc.). With reference to Boltansky and Chiapello (Boltansky and Chiapello 2007), Andreasen and Larsen come to see mediation as a way of capitalising on relations, which in turn is a dominant mode of profit-making inherent to the neoliberal immaterial labour economy. In their view mediation merely quantifies relations and allows for objects to project meanings in new power/knowledge configurations (Larsen and Andreasen 2011, 64) and as such the art object loses its potential to qualitatively remain itself. In other words, it loses its autonomy as an object. However important this reservation is, it only doubles back on their original claim that the mediating subject needs to be analysed in order to understand the curator as a cultural producer, who is, literally working in the middle and thus also complicit in producing the economic and power relations of the field within which he or she is working – even if they are critically addressed.

Par le milieu

Working from this middle through a methodology of "committed collaborations" (Marcus 2010, 268) carries a responsibility toward the people you work with and the environments you work in. A responsibility not only for presenting the artworks in compliance with the artist's wishes, but also with regards to other collaborators such as the institution, audiences/participants, stakeholders, funding bodies etc. As stated above, working from the middle can be described with reference to Isabelle Stengers' idea of an "ecology of practises" (Stengers 2005) in which a "social technology of belonging" (Stengers 2005, 189-191) is a central element. As a practitioner-researcher I have been entangled in the very fabric of that social technology, which I have simultaneously tried to disentangle. This means that in my work, simply to "follow what is going on" (Ingold 2011, 14) has implied that I have had to navigate, both practically and in my writing, between these various collaborators. The idea that social technology is what holds a particular ecology together through the inhabitants' sense of belonging,

while at the same time regulating the space of their possible actions is essentially a Foucauldian figure of thought, even if Stengers does not explicate this directly. As a social technology belonging within a certain ecology, for instance the art world, means that modes of subjectivation are constantly coded and recoded. Here it might be objected that the ethics connected to Stengers' idea of belonging try to level out internal contradictions and struggles within any given ecology and as such it leaves little space for antagonism or for "the sometimes radical oppositional theme" (Foucault 2008, 320) that Foucault identified as a driving force behind "the criticism of reality" (Foucault 2008, 320).

For Stengers the point is that within the social technology of belonging there are two main matters of concern at work, "the question of empowering, a matter of fostering, and the question of diplomacy, a matter of challenging" (Stengers 2005, 192). But there is no master narrative to challenge because "a problem is always a practical problem, never a universal problem mattering for everybody" (Stengers 2005, 193). It is in this way that I can apply the idea of belonging within an ecology of practices to my own situatedness within this project – as a description of the operational space I have been able to inhabit and the perspective I have been able to apply to my material. Both of which are inextricably bound to the concrete contexts I have been working in both as a practitioner and researcher.[37]

These concerns relate not only to the ideas of intransitivity and committed collaborations as already described with regards to the fieldwork-based research design but also, and perhaps especially, to the representation and critical discussion of artworks, projects, people, institutions and discourses within my text. This was pinpointed in a correspondence I had with Kabir Carter concerning the framing in my dissertation of his project *Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field* as a participatory project

[37] By these concrete contexts I mean the conditions under which the present project has been conducted, including the precarious employment situation for humanistic PhD's in Danish academia in general. During my time at The Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at UCHP I have attended two group staff development interviews for PhD's and postdoc's. At both occasions our head of department emphasised how she saw her primary task in relation to us as a group as one of securing that we would be able to pursue careers outside of the university. Due to the general cutbacks and recruitment freezes the transition from PhD or postdoc to tenured assistant professor has become an increasingly unrealistic scenario for many of us. This situation has obviously influenced my sense of where I belonged while doing this project as it has seemed more likely that I would continue my career outside of the university rather than within.

where he rhetorically asked me "at what point are specialized terms from other disciplines creating stoppages and failures in how artistic endeavors are understood in situ?" (Kabir Carter, email correspondence, 12 December 2016). His question highlights a tension that addresses the relation between the academic knowledge I produce in this dissertation and the situational knowledge produced by the artworks and projects I have curated in the concrete contexts they have formed part of. It also highlights questions of how I am able to write from *within* the social technology of my practice and still retain the possibility of critical engagement. Stengers' proposition would be to escape from what she calls major key thinking, which seems to suggest a critique of positivist ideals of objectivity. However, it is essential that we distinguish between escape and avoidance:

> If the ecology of practices is to be a tool for thinking, it will understand that avoidance is not the renunciation of any major key, accompanied by some unending deconstructive discourse which would put the renunciation itself at centre stage. (Stengers 2005, 187)

Rather, escaping the major key for Stengers entails a qualification of the idea of the middle as a Deleuzian way of "thinking par le milieu" (Stengers 2005, 187). As Stengers explains, this phrase plays on "the French double meaning of milieu, both the middle and the surroundings or habitat" (Stengers 2005, 187).

> 'Through the middle' would mean without grounding definitions or an ideal horizon. 'With the surroundings' would mean that no theory gives you the power to disentangle something from its particular surroundings. (Stengers 2005, 187)

This idea of thinking through the middle and with the surroundings as a critical and constructive movement has affinity to Irit Rogoff's distinction between "curating" and "the curatorial," that she develops in a discussion with Beatrice von Bismarck (von Bismarck and Rogoff 2012). To Rogoff "curating is first and foremost a set of skills and abilities" that "operates within the regime of the representational" (von Bismarck and Rogoff 2012, 22-23) whereas "in the curatorial, the emphasis is on the trajectory of ongoing, active work, not an isolated end product" (von Bismarck and Rogoff 2012, 23). She further describes the curatorial as

> […] the event of knowledge; a moment in which different knowledges interacting with one another produce something that transcends their position as knowledge. (von Bismarck and Rogoff 2012, 23)

This resonates with Rogoff's earlier work on the notion of criticality that she sees as the necessary consequence of the entanglement of contemporary knowledge production

(Rogoff 2004). Opposed to criticism and critique, criticality does not work at a distance but rather from within entanglement itself. It is defined precisely by the absence of a master narrative to guide it.[38]

This sense of criticality corresponds to Andreasen and Larsen's curator-middleman although it might downplay the capitalist logic they develop him/her alongside. However, if we stress the Deleuzian impulse that seems to spark their initial idea of the middleman as one who is literally in the middle of things and constructed through and through by relations, the term may be able to carve out a place for curatorship to be a kind of criticality. This middle is then ambivalently construed by relations and performativity as well as it is both complicit in and critical of the contexts that it generates and reproduces. Stengers' text lays out an ecological performative ethics of thinking that is able to acknowledge its complicity but at the same time encompasses a responsibility (which would be highly unfamiliar to capitalism's middleman-as-intermediary) towards its environment – in my case towards the interlocutors I have sought out through my curatorial choices. Both artists, institutions and audiences, but also a responsibility towards the academic community that I form part of to critically enter into these environments and relations. In order to describe such middlemanship from the perspective of an ecology of practices, Stengers' proposition would seem to be to relinquish the "ambition to describe practices 'as they are'" (Stengers 2005, 186) but rather to construct

> […] new 'practical identities' for practices, that is, new possibilities for them to be present, or in other words to connect. [An ecology of practices] thus does not approach practices as they are – physics as we know it, for instance – but as they may become. (Stengers 2005, 186)

If attempting to describe practices as they are would mean violating their claim for individuality or singularity by relegating them to a position as representations within a master narrative, then addressing them as they may become would have to encompass a performative diffractive style of writing. This involves analysing and critiquing the

[38] It is obvious that Rogoff's thinking has great affinity to Stengers' and Manning & Massumi's Deleuzian and performative thinking. As such I do employ a mode of thinking within this dissertation that might be within "the curatorial" mode as it "opens up a space of theoretical reflection and speculation that upsets the process of fulfilling" (Friis Sørensen 2014, 17) the deliverables promised by curating. However, I think that the notion of "the curatorial" is too narrow and too invested in a visual arts context to quite encompass my activities. For this reason I do not employ it as a strong concept in this dissertation but rather use the word curatorial, without definite article, in a looser manner as an adjective to describe my activities.

relational structures that may enable or disable such connections – the relational structures that underlie my research project – rather than entailing a critique of the artistic outcomes ensuing from the project.

Inhabiting the complicity, D'Or?

As described above the situation with the work of Andreas Führer did more or less leave me in dead water with regards to its representation in my text. If he denied that it was in need of interpretation how should I put it in motion as an empirical object for my research? In a certain sense this situation, as well as the piece itself, opened up a possibility to apply the critical perspectives discussed in the above. By blurring the distinction between map and territory and pointing to the potential for mental representations to reinscribe themselves onto territories the situation and the piece opened up for a diffractive style of writing. A style that could critically engage with the piece and its contexts and work as simultaneously fostering and challenging. The opportunity to do so came more or less by coincidence through the co-production of an audio paper with Jan Høgh Stricker for the conference *Fluid Sounds* in 2015.[39] Answering the conference's call for exploring "bodily, situated and affective modes of research"[40] through the production of site-specific audio papers we decided to performatively appropriate Führer's audio walk as an experimentation with the relations between

> […] artist and theorist, artwork, embodied experience and academic representation, all of which are categories rendered somewhat problematic by the format of the audio paper itself. (Holmboe and Stricker 2016)

Due to my problems with the representation and status of Andreas Führer's work within my own writing and as a consequence of the conference call's wish "to transform academic knowledge into performances, and performances into aesthetic knowledge,"[41] it had been important for us from the outset that our audio paper should not be an interpretation of Führer's piece in any traditional hermeneutic sense. Rather we were seeking to employ it as a thinking-machine for enacting a kind of immanent critique (Manning and Massumi 2014, 87) as suggested by Erin Manning and Brian Massumi. Or as a mode of criticality as forwarded by Irit Rogoff (Rogoff 2004, 2005). The format

[39] The conference was part of "PSi Fluid States – Performances of Unknowing" and was organised by Sanne Krogh Groth and Kristine Samson.

[40] https://fluidsounds.ruc.dk/about/ (accessed 23 March 2017).

[41] https://fluidsounds.ruc.dk/about/ (accessed 23 March 2017).

of the audio paper offered an apt opportunity to do so. The final production featured a speculative theoretical text in English written by me but spoken by Andreas Führer himself, clips from an interview in Danish that Jan Høgh Stricker had conducted while walking the route with Andreas during the *ACTS* Festival, and recordings from performances of the piece, including the sounds of walking, breathing exercises and the ventilation systems at the locations where performers were instructed by the score to stop and listen. Initially I had composed the theoretical text in nine short sections (or, if you will, plateaus) in order to make it imitate the nine designated listening posts in the audiowalk but eventually we had to cut out some of the argument(s) in order to adjust the production to the maximum duration of 15 minutes as specified by the editors. For the production we deliberately chose to blur the distinctions between academic paper and artwork, artist and theorist, site-specificity and recorded sound as a way of complicating and implicitly discussing the already blurred relation between map and territory that my work with Andreas' piece had exposed. As such, working in another format than the classic academic text very pragmatically carved out a space where I was able to inhabit both curatorial and academic practice at once. Thus it became a precise and productive way of challenging Führer's piece by appropriating it for the purposes of a theoretical argument while at the same time fostering its presence as an object independent of my practice.

Of course not all work can be treated by such a radical form of performative appropriation. The opportunity to work in this way only became possible because Führer agreed to participate, thus ensuring me that he would welcome the attempt to manipulate his work – something essentially beyond his control. At the same time it is obvious that I cannot, will not, turn this dissertation into a speculative audio paper. Yet working in that format gave rise to a practical recognition of the elements of performativity implied in my working methods, which have also deeply influenced how I have been able to treat my material in the writing of this dissertation. The process of working with my material in this way showed the potential of a deflective rather than a merely reflective writing strategy to accommodate for the empirical situation I have found myself in as a subject of the technology of belonging within the particular ecology of practices I have described throughout this chapter.

Having established curating as a highly performative mode of research in the context of this project Stengers' proposition to describe practices not as they are, but as they

may become (Stengers 2005, 186), may seem like an even more radical and diffractive performative (or possibly even speculative) approach to account for such research. However, "as they may become" does not mean that I need to suggest ways for practices to become 'better' or more adequate to their own environment or situation – rather it reads as a proposition to create opportunities for practices to engage differently, to connect, or to be present. As such my deployment of performative diffraction as a form of critique does not stem directly from a radical rejection of representation, such as the one carried out by for instance Karen Barad (Barad 2003), but rather one that goes back to Donna Haraway's initial idea of displacing "the terminology of reproduction with that of generation" (Haraway 1992, 299) in order to spell out her claim that reproduction is always already "the generation of novel forms" (Haraway 1992, 299). In Haraway diffraction is meant as

> […] a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the *effects* of difference appear. (Haraway 1992, 300)

Returning to how I am able to represent the committed collaborations of my fieldwork in this text, the example of the audio paper and my work with Andreas Führer shows how it has been on a background of matters of representation that these effects of difference between myself and my collaborators have appeared – in the relational enmeshment of my work rather than as an effect of its products. These effects of difference have also been produced from the relations between situations and processes on the one side and institutions and discourses on the other. It is these effects that my writing engages with. This means that I do not engage in interpretations of the artworks to which I have been complicit but rather analyse the contexts they have made visible. The tensions and resonances between myself and my collaborators will render themselves differently according to the concrete collaborations but the diffraction patterns are created through a prism of representation that the remainder of the dissertation will map out in different registers. I pursue what Simon O'Sullivan has suggested in his readings of Deleuze as "not an abandonment of, but a reengagement with, the matter of representation, albeit representation in a different way" (O'Sullivan 2006, 34), where I seek to deterritorialise the specific discourses or systems of knowledge related to my fields of practice. This means that I engage with the situations produced by artworks and practices in a wider field – *and* in the field of my own work in order to try to search out

"something other than the sacred image of the same, something inappropriate, unfitting, and so, inappropriated" (Haraway 1992, 300), to use the words of Donna Haraway. As such I believe it is possible to map out a space where critical artistic, curatorial and museological practices can be enabled rather than inhibited – both fostered and challenged. In other words I do indeed take inspiration from Andreas Führer's work when I appropriate it as a thinking-machine for this chapter, and turn it into my own tool to serve as a device for a simultaneous mapping of both the topology and tropology of a field – or as an attempt to reinscribe the map onto the territory. As we shall see in the chapters that follow, I employ this methodology of the artwork as a thinking-machine in order to be able to critique some of the contexts that co-determine how we may experience and understand artistic work with sound in the relation to the museum institution. The performative diffraction as a generative and constructive tool enables a broader view that is not invested in criticism of the artwork but rather engages in an inhabited criticality grounded in the deconstructive analyses of the cultural formations whose contexts it seeks to disentangle, criticise and invigorate. Not by avoiding the major key but rather by renouncing it as part of its critique.

This methodological and theoretical outlook has its obvious weaknesses. From an art historical point of view it is highly unsuitable to analyse and interpret the meaning and cultural significance of distinct artistic or exhibition practices, let alone art works. It is not a methodology that enables the writing of art history or art criticism because it is too entangled in its object of analysis. From an anthropological point of view it is way too enmeshed in its own analytic object and empirical context to make any clear demarcations between the practical, analytical, and theoretical interests of knowledge. The threshold between research interests and object of research is simply compromised by my unwillingness to establish a distance between the two. From the point of view of research ethics, my work is thus at great risk of misrepresenting or downright exploiting the artistic and museum practices I engage with as part of my performative appropriations of artworks or practices as machines for thinking. Furthermore, the machinic thinking is at risk of severing the connection between empirical stuff and pure speculation. These are weaknesses that I welcome, and risks that I am willing to take in order to let practices remain intransitive and enmeshed. And it is weaknesses and risks I have deemed necessary in order to be able to critique the knowledge/power formations that these practices challenge or maintain within the concrete contexts they produce.

4. Museums and cultural democracy

The MFSK's 25th anniversary exhibition *Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.* opened in late January 2016. For this exhibition I was part of the curatorial team together with museum director Birgitte Kirkhoff Eriksen and curator in charge of learning Tine Seligmann. It became a group show where we invited five artists with rather different practices: Claus Haxholm, Hannah Heilmann, Rolf Nowotny, Olof Olsson and Kenneth A. Balfelt. In the invitation letter we asked them to

> […] interpret/disseminate/reflect/appropriate one or more artworks or objects from the museum's archives, documentation, art collection or other history. (Invitation letter to artists, 9 September 2015, my translation)

But this is only where it ended. It started somewhere else – as an idea about what the museum was and could possibly be, which is the focus of this chapter where I unfold and discuss some of the considerations that went ahead of the exhibition. This means taking a step back from addressing the singular artistic contributions and instead look at the curatorial ideas that preceded the exhibition in order to elucidate some of the challenges that art museums face in the current political and cultural climate. My aim is to critically qualify and contextualise these discussions that form part of a currently vivid debate inside and outside the museum community about the relevance of museums in contemporary society. This debate also includes the value systems that determine art's role and function within this society as well as ideas of its relative autonomy from these systems. The debate can be characterised by the observation of the profound reorientation towards the museum visitor that we are currently experiencing. In this debate terms like audience development, participation, the actualisation of content and learning have gained foothold while talk of preservation, cultural heritage, Bildung, and traditional (art) historical research has waned or taken on a secondary role in support of the former. Put in bold terms it can be expressed as a shift from a traditional content-based self-sufficient museum toward a more service-oriented museum that focusses on "users and their active involvement in terms of "participation"" (Sørensen 2016, 4). The reorientation also expresses a shift in the biopolitical role that museums and art play in society in which function and expediency are becoming increasingly important political and economic parameters that guide and shape what is possible and how initiatives are imagined and valued.

One of the focal points of the discussions within the curatorial team that went ahead of the exhibition was the twin notions of cultural democracy and the democratisation of culture. This was roughly conceived as respectively bottom-up and top-down perspectives on the museum's relation to its users and society. For the points discussed in the following I will be focusing specifically on the *art* museum as a special case of museums where the relation between the terms can be set up through a list of binaries. How, on the one hand, contemporary art is seen as a democratising methodology for concrete socio-political change, while on the other it represents an elitist enterprise in need of democratisation. How, on the one hand, contemporary art is considered as to have critical and subversive potential towards existent structures of knowledge/power, while on the other it remains affirmative of them. Or conversely; how, on the one hand, contemporary art can be a useful instrument in social and cultural policy, while on the other it often tends to resist and subvert such instrumentalisation. Or finally; how, on the one hand, institutions and governmental bodies have certain requirements that they need artists to fulfil, while on the other hand these requirements are always negotiated and transformed as part of the curatorial and artistic processes. As such the discussion forms part of a broader set of concerns that have been put forward in various versions of museology at least during the past 35 years: What is the changing role of museums within culture and society at this point in time? What are the conceptions of culture and the democratic ideals that underlie how we value our museums and how are these values negotiated? What kinds of knowledge do museums produce and what are the purposes of this knowledge production? How does the relation between the visitor and the museum generate and negotiate cultural value and how do museums manage this relation? Which forms of sociality do museums enable and which may become neglected or omitted? What is the role and status of (contemporary) art within this cultural battlefield?

These questions form the backdrop for the following, admittedly, more local inquiry into the historical and political backgrounds of our curatorial intentions with the anniversary exhibition. As such the practical context of the curatorial process I was involved with provides an occasion to address the current state of the museum institution and provide a more general critique of its position within contemporary neoliberal governance. I do this by engaging with a body of central museological texts, a brief history of democratisation of culture vis-à-vis cultural democracy within Danish cultural policy,

the recent reformulation of the Danish Museum Act, and the Foucauldian notions of governmentality and biopolitics. Through this I hope to elucidate the institutional and political context of the anniversary exhibition project in specific – as well as to offer a broader analysis of the cultural role that the art museum can possibly play in contemporary Danish society including the relations between conceptions of institutions, democracy and cultures by the early 21st century. This discussion also paves the way and sets the institutional context for the latter part of the dissertation's focus on artistic practice with sound and sound in the arts.

Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.

From the outset of the planning of the anniversary exhibition, everyone in the curatorial team felt that a traditional retrospective collection show would be boring and that it would misrepresent both the progressiveness that runs in the history of the MFSK as well as our ideas about the future of the museum. These ideas for the future had been recently fuelled by the change of directors from Sanne Kofod Olsen to Birgitte Kirkhoff Eriksen a little over a year before the opening of the show, in November 2014. As such shifts tend to do, this too revitalised the discussions about what a museum is – or rather what it should or could be. The new ideas were formulated in a new strategic plan highlighting a role for the museum as "a relevant actor in society" (Eriksen 2016, my translation) and introducing a new mission statement:

> Taking the themes and methods of art as a starting point, the MFSK works with social, cultural and environmental challenges to affect our present and future. (Eriksen 2016, my translation) [42]

As the title *Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.*[43] suggests, our main curatorial ambition for the anniversary exhibition was to reflect on and question the past, present and possible future(s) of the museum. At the first brainstorms in the curatorial team we set the aims high. Among the ideas discussed were an exhibition concept that would turn the museum into several public participatory workshops running through the entire exhibition period. The content of these workshops was conceptualised as openly as possible as an invitation to let the museum visitors contribute with inputs as to how they would want

[42] Original Danish wording: "Med afsæt i kunstens tematikker og metoder arbejder MFSK med sociale, kulturelle og miljømæssige udfordringer for at påvirke vores nutid og fremtid."

[43] The title was coined by one of the invited artists, Olof Olsson.

to engage with and use the museum. Within this idea the role of the artists was envisioned as that of facilitators of processes, which was one of the central thoughts also expressed in the new mission statement. Our basic idea was to open the museum by relinquishing our own curatorial authority in favour of an artistic framing of all possible forms of interaction between museum users, the staff, the collection, the archives, the architecture and the museum's history etc. – all generated by public demand. We wanted to open up the inside workings of the museum to more direct interaction with our visitors. The exhibition would be generated and produced as it went along, as a collaborative effort between visitors, artists, and museum. The gallery spaces were imagined as workshops where visitors not participating in the ongoing workshops and activities would have the opportunity to experience the running day to day undertakings and events. Or if they were not in session, to follow the transformation of the space during the exhibition period. Opening hours would be fluid and based on the activities going on and the needs generated by the users. Behind this idea was a wish to more precisely examine how our visitors would imagine their ideal museum of contemporary art to be and how they would want to use it. We wanted this invitation to stretch beyond our usual core audience to probe the potential for a broader public engagement with the museum as a facilitator of processes. We wanted to extend the question of how we could be more relevant to the public. Specifically, to our public.

For various pragmatic reasons that I shall return to by the end of this chapter we did not realise this concept but ended up inviting the five artists mentioned. We asked them to help us

> […] examine and activate the role of the museum and its future on the background of its history, both locally as the MFSK and on a more general level related to the museum institution. (Invitation letter to artists, 9 September 2015, my translation)

Each artist was allocated one gallery room for the exhibition and it was stipulated in the invitation that we wanted the entire exhibition to be engaging, living and involving. We wanted it to be possible for visitors to create their own experience and form their own impression of contemporary art as well as the roles of the museum and the artist in society. At one of our initial meetings with these artists, director Birgitte Kirkhoff Eriksen presented some of our ideas and explained how she saw a conflict currently characterising the MFSK (as well as museums writ large) between two contrasting ideas of culture: on the one hand an idea of a 'high' culture in need of democratisation – and

on the other, the idea of cultural democracy where culture was seen as non-hierarchical, distributed and processual. In essence this is a conflict between what can be described as a normative and an anthropological approach to questions of culture, respectively. She also identified a current crisis of relevance for the museum. She explained how she saw this crisis as an effect of the often exclusionary and specialised paradigms of knowledge employed by contemporary art professionals such as ourselves, and inscribed in museum practices via the relative educational homogeneity of art museum personnel (as well as regular art museum-goers). She argued that this homogeneity was causing the reproduction of a normative elitist discourse mainly associated with art history as a specialised disciplinary field. Contrary to this elitist isolation she wanted to make the museum more open and relevant to a broader public and to society instead of just catering for a community of specialised art world peers. In order to be more broadly relevant she advocated that focus should be on the production of relational knowledge, which she presented as knowledge that was "situated, performative and where value is relativistic" (Eriksen 2015, 22, my translation).[44] An important part of this was to extend the questions of value and relevance to the museum users as a bottom-up strategy. In her model she linked the democratisation of culture to the specialised knowledge paradigm as a top-down dissemination of high art and, conversely, a bottom-up idea of cultural democracy to a relative or distributed, anthropological knowledge paradigm. Within this juxtaposition she identified a current, general paradigm shift from the former to the latter within a broader cultural context as something the museum would consequently have to adhere to in order to remain in touch with its users. In an unpublished paper she explained how the role of the museum is changing

> […] from being the one, who can answer all the questions, the disseminator, to being the facilitator of distributed knowledge and culturalisation processes. (Eriksen 2015, 23, my translation)

However, the idea of cultural democracy has itself a somewhat variegated genealogy in the European context. Relating it in oppositional terms to the democratisation of culture, professor in arts management Yves Evrard has made a simple but rather clear distinction. The democratisation of culture is aligned with an authoritative dogmatic

[44] Most of the themes in Eriksen's argument and in our discussions within the curatorial team are also developed in an unpublished paper she wrote as part of her Diploma in Cultural Management (Eriksen 2015). In what follows I support my memory and field notes with quotes from this paper in order to represent her thoughts as accurately as possible.

(focused on aesthetic beauty and artistic intention) whereas cultural democracy is aligned with reception aesthetics (focused on choice and individual interpretation). To Evrard the democratisation of culture has as its "aim to disseminate major cultural works to an audience that does not have ready access to them" (Evrard 1997, 168). On the other hand, cultural democracy is

> […] founded on free individual choice, in which the role of a cultural policy is not to interfere with the preferences expressed by citizen-consumers but to support the choices made by individuals or social groups through a regulatory policy applied to the distribution of information or the structures of supply, as happens in other types of markets.
>
> The two models are in a "Copernican" opposition in the sense that the first centers on artwork being disseminated widely and the second centers on providing an individual with the opportunity to exercise free choice. (Evrard 1997, 168)

However, according to organisational leadership researcher Søren Friis Møller (Friis Møller 2012, 109-116) the idea of cultural democracy has much wider ramifications as it is also connected to the kind of postcolonial identity politics and critique of representation developed by, among others, Stuart Hall (Hall et al. 2001), Edward Said (Said 2007) and Homi Bhabha (Bhabha 2012). Within the frame of such theorisations of diversity Friis Møller rightly argues that any Western, male, white, modernist cultural narrative obviously becomes suspect because it very clearly constructs the category of the Other as subordinate and hence displays a fundamental inequality in the distribution of power/knowledge. It leads him to a rather pessimistic conclusion:

> In spite of substantial criticism, drawing both on fundamental conditions for democracy, and the hybridizing properties of culture throughout history, it has not been possible, even in those countries most ardent in their efforts, to open the cultural sector to more multicultural approaches, not to mention turning the cultural sector into a platform for supporting and encouraging multiculturalism and hybridization of cultures and creativity in a broader sense. What this suggests is that *'democratization of culture'* (Hughson & Inglis, 2009:473), a top down approach to cultural policies of which the aim is to bring *'the best to the rest'*, seems to be predominant in terms of legitimization [sic] the modes according to which the cultural sector operates. This also suggests, that changing policies to better accommodate multicultural ambitions and hopes is but a first step in a long and arduous process which also includes changing the grounds on which the cultural sector is legitimized. Those profiting from the way the cultural sector is currently organized and the way it prioritizes certain cultural expressions at the expense of others are unlikely to

> give up their privileges without resistance. (Friis Møller 2012, 115)[45]

It is easy to agree with Søren Friis Møller and Birgitte Kirkhoff Eriksen that cultural institutions such as museums, on a daily basis perform exclusion based on the political and economic structures they form part of and the cultural traditions they preserve and develop. This calls for serious and immediate change if we want a better and more inclusive society (including its institutions) where social and economic equality can go hand in hand with cultural diversity. However, I do believe that the binary construction of the argument that marks democratisation of culture as the enemy and cultural democracy the solution is too simplistic and expresses a confusion of categories that in effect reproduces the cultural differences of privilege it aims to criticise. As such this binary reinforces the institutionalised othering that it tries to overcome.

I shall return to this argument shortly, but in order to substantiate it there is a need to think things differently. I would like to offer a brief recourse to a body of recent museum literature addressing how museums need to change in the face of the wider societal and global development that we are presently facing. Writing in a North American, more specifically Canadian, context, Robert R. Janes has argued that museums taken largely are at great risk of becoming irrelevant[46] as public social institutions simply because they fail to address the major global, ecological and humanitarian challenges we are facing in the light of advanced consumerism and global-scale hyper-capitalism (Janes 2009, 26-34). Janes offers an account where he sees "the collective perspective of the museum community to be dangerously narrow at this point in history" (Janes 2009, 23) partly because many museums still work within an elitist paradigm instead of embracing "the opportunity to honour the trust and respect that the public affords them, in part by engaging in the interests and aspirations of their communities" (Janes 2009, 22). For museum scholar Graham Black the need for museums to change seems equally urgent. In line with Janes, he argues that the decline in public funding that is

[45] The text by Hughson and Inglis referred to by Friis Møller does not appear in his bibliography. However, the pagination in his citation suggests that he is referring to the article "'Creative Industries' and the Arts in Britain: Towards a 'Third Way' in Cultural Policy" (Hughson and Inglis 2001) from 2001 (and not 2009), which does figure in his bibliography.

[46] Janes is a long-time museum director and museum management consultant and thus he mainly addresses the problem of irrelevance from a management perspective. Here, one of his main points is that the goals of the institution are often mismatched with the individual goals and competences of its employees leading to a situation where the potential for change is not fully realised even if it is present in both leadership and staff.

seen on an almost world-wide scale necessitates a radical reformulation of the museum's purpose in society – a reformulation that many museums according to Black have failed to address properly. Black focuses on how informal learning[47] is becoming "a lifetime pursuit" (Black 2012, 1) and on the ways in which new media and digital social networking are currently transforming democratic participation. Furthermore, he identifies changes in the demographic composition of the population as one of the reasons why museums are failing to engage new audiences. For Black the diversity is becoming "more diverse" (Black 2012, 3)[48] and thus we need to replace earlier monocultural demographic models with newer and more diversified ones. As a consequence of the diversification he identifies an attitudinal change where people

> […] today increasingly refuse to be passive recipients of whatever governments, companies or cultural institutions such as museums offer; instead they seek to be active members of […] 'the age of participation'. (Black 2012, 3)

Black also points out in his diagnosis that the internet to a large extent has lessened the value of museum collections both in terms of accessibility and as a challenge to the traditional authority of museum knowledge.[49]

Summarised in this way it seems easy to locate the backgrounds for such critiques of the museum community in general and by implication to endorse the promotion of a

[47] Learning is one of the most innovative and growing areas of recent museology and has attracted a remarkable amount of funding at museums in recent years. For more literature see (Black 2012, 75-201, Hooper-Greenhill 1994, Villeneuve 2008, Falk, Dierking, and Foutz 2007, Falk 2013), and the journals *Journal of Museum Education* and *Studies in Art Education*. While in the course of this research I have become convinced that a better integration of learning initiatives and curatorial work within the traditional divisions of labour at museums would harbour the greatest potential of all for museums to become more relevant to their users, I have chosen not to focus specifically on museum learning in the dissertation as learning was not part of my initial research questions and thus did not play any substantial role for my original project design or in my curatorial projects.

[48] Black attributes this phrase to the Wallace Foundation. I have been unable to find the original quotation.

[49] Opposite claims have also been put forward, e.g. by Boris Groys (Groys 2008, 20-22), claiming that because museum collections are in fact curated this makes them necessary as counterpoints to digital and mass media narratives. Or as Morten Søndergaard has argued, the bodily, social and intersubjective aspects of engaging with collections (however mediated or mediatised) in the physical museum space still remains central to the development of critical perspectives on digital media and ubiquitous mediatisation, precisely because the museum as a public institution still has the potential to question the economic logics of corporate strategies by way of appropriation and subversion (Søndergaard and Jacobsen 2009, 27-32). I return to Groys' argument in the end of the chapter.

more inclusive vision of what we can call cultural democracy. However, in my opinion, while Janes advances his argument from moral responsibility towards looming social and environmental disaster, and Black tends to want to cater to the changing demands of the museum users in the light of an anthropological conception of culture as the most important reasons for the apparent crisis – both of these arguments tend to abstain from discussing specific discourses on art in their discussions of the production of cultural value and identity.[50] From my perspective it is striking that both accounts more or less lump all types of museums regardless of their content area together into a theoretically convenient conception of *the* museum. Thus there is a tendency that content takes a secondary position in their discussions, and consequently, that museums become both media *and* message in a McLuhanian sense. My contention to this reduction is that there is a world of difference in terms of relevance between a museum for contemporary art and a museum of natural history or an ethnographic museum – simply by the intervention of its content, which makes the criteria for relevance different, and in each case, specific. In the case of the MFSK this would be (but not be limited to) the imbrication of contemporary art in contemporary culture, economics and society, shaping it as an ideological battlefield in the construction of cultural and political concerns, narratives and identifications in the broadest sense of these terms.

Following this understanding it is my view that contemporary art is continuously relevant to the museum's public *because* of its content's contemporaneity.[51] Contemporary art is in itself part of the construction of the specific conditions under which the museum

[50] Janes does have a short passage (Janes 2009, 131-134) about an art gallery, the GoMA in Glasgow, which since 1999 has been developing a profile based on promoting social justice. Janes describes a project made with artist Patricia Mackinnon-Day in some detail but progresses to conclude that "this gallery's remarkable journey into the realm of social justice has joined the best in contemporary art practice with social change and the creation of more compassionate communities." (Janes 2009, 134) While social justice and the creation of more compassionate communities are important issues to any art gallery or museum – I have severe reservations about any notion of 'the best' in contemporary art that stands out as a highly normative and in itself exclusionary notion, implying that someone knows better what is the best for someone else. This knowledgeable someone here in fact being Janes – and not the social agents on whose behalf he purports to speak. I believe that art's potential for social change involves far more complex relations that cannot be reduced to 'the best in contemporary art practice', a statement which at the very least needs to be substantiated reflexively as well as it needs to be properly historicised.

[51] This rests on the view that contemporary art is not just art that is made now. Rather I take the term to designate art that addresses contemporary conditions and life in the broadest possible sense.

can operate and make itself relevant. This entails that museological and curatorial focus must be kept fiercely on this content in order not to leave contemporary art emptied out of its potential political and social relevance. I am not arguing for a return to a revolutionary avant-garde ethos of political change through art like what Peter Bürger ascribed to the early avant-gardes (Bürger 1974). As cultural theorist Mikkel Bolt has shown, this position is no longer available as the avant-gardes either left art behind and turned to revolutionary politics (as in the case of the Situationist International) or became subsumed under the ever-expanding notion of contemporary art where critique could only remain affirmative because it was put forward from well within the limits of the art institution and economy of the art world (Bolt 2009, 9-18). However, the opposite conclusion; that art has lost its critical potential because it has merely become affirmative, seems too pessimistic as it would ultimately also render not only art but also the art museum itself irrelevant.

Returning to the juxtaposition of democratisation of culture and cultural democracy, we need to look more closely at the forms under which democratic ideals, the museum and contemporary art may intersect in order to perform a more specific analysis of the notion of relevance and of the social and political modes of identification that cultural democracy/democratisation of culture imply and make possible. In other words, we need not look at the democratisation of culture as 'the enemy'. It is not the democratisation of culture that fostered elitism within our cultural institutions. It is the other way around. And there is a distinct difference between the identity politics that underlie Friis Møller's idea of cultural democracy, and the *realpolitik* of cultural democracy as it has been practiced in Danish cultural policy and elsewhere since the 1970s (Duelund 2001, 2003, Evrard 1997, Hughson and Inglis 2001). Constructing the notion of cultural democracy as based solely on the postcolonial condition and as a binary opposition to the democratisation of culture within national cultural policies in fact reproduces cultural democracy as something itself in need of democratisation. As Sara Ahmed has argued in her feminist critique of postmodernism's construction of difference, difference has in itself become a universalism that neglects the bodily situatedness of the subject. Accordingly, the differences within difference that can be brought out by the question "which differences matter *here*?" (Ahmed 1998, 191, my emphasis) also tend to get neglected. From Ahmed's perspective it becomes possible to broaden the scope of Friis Møller's critique and look *within* cultural democracy while still retaining the possibility

that *both* the subject *and* the artwork can have significance for themselves and matter in concrete contexts. The question of the museum's relevance is not a matter of an opposition between *elitist art* and *public demand* but rather a question of how, in specific contexts, these can be brought into dialogue while still retaining the tension between them.

Excursus: the policy of cultural democracy in Denmark

In order to make the distinction between cultural democracy and democratisation of culture clearer in the context of Danish art museums it is necessary to qualify art's relation to concepts of culture as well as the notion of cultural democracy in specific relation to Danish cultural policy. The following historic excursus into the genealogy of the concept is meant to prepare the ground for the latter part of the chapter's discussions of cultural democracy in the specific governmental and biopolitical frame of the Danish state and its cultural institutions. Historically the notion of cultural democracy hinges on the fundamental idea within western democracy that identification and subjectification within a society or community is constituted through active participation and that the sense of social and cultural belonging that participation generates is in turn necessary to produce meaningful citizenship for both state and the individual (Horsdal 2000, 184-187). As such it relies on a consensus construed at the base of democracy that equality or egalitarianism are the ultimate positive goals of good governance. As Peter Duelund has shown, Danish cultural policy since WW2 has been built around such an "overall objective of equal cultural opportunities for all" (Duelund 2003, 70).

Initially this ideal was formulated in terms of democratisation of culture construed as the dissemination of elitist art to the broader public with the aim of heightening their general educational level. The idea that fine arts had potential to do this bears obvious reminiscence of ideas of culture as a strive for perfection by way of "the best which has been thought and said in the world" as Mathew Arnold once put it (Arnold 2011, viii). However, as Johann Gottfried Herder already recognised by the end of the 18th Century, all social groups 'possess' equal amounts of culture but not all cultures are equal (Hastrup 2004, 27). In Herder, language and history became primary markers of a society's identity formulated as its *Volksgeist* (Hastrup 2004, 30, 32), as that which would form its unity relative to other societies and determine and simultaneously shape its place in history (Hastrup 2004, 33). Such ideas do on the one side promote a hierarchy of cultures founded in the nation state, while on the other side espousing a teleological

view of history implying that the most advanced arts would also be the best. Related to a more concrete level of Danish cultural policy Peter Duelund has shown (Duelund 2001) how the idea of democratisation of culture in Denmark was closely linked to the idea of Grundtvigianism[52] and the people's enlightenment movement, which has been influential in Danish cultural policy since the mid-19th century. In Duelund's account, Grundtvigianism's project was to consolidate a national identity against the "German Threat" in the wake of the Schleswig-Holstein wars (1848-1850 and 1963-1964). An identity that focused on equal rights and Danishness as "a sense of history, a pacifist temperament, a feeling of one large family, and mastery of a delightful language" (Duelund 2001, 37).

This Grundtvigianism in Danish cultural policy was supplemented up through the 20th century by calls made by the Danish Labour Movement for the development of the "close relationship among class identity, national identity, and cultural policy" (Duelund 2001, 37). These relations became decisive factors in shaping the idea of "collective organisation in the fight for social welfare, political influence, and cultural competence" (Duelund 2001, 37), which were foundational themes in the Social Democratic Party's cultural policy. This strand of policy was spearheaded by Julius Bomholt (1896-1969), who became the first Danish minister of culture in 1961. Bomholt's foremost goal of cultural policy was to grant "equal access to culture through wide dissemination of the fine arts" (Duelund 2001, 38).

Furthermore, the idea of Cultural Radicalism has been important to understand the connections between politics and culture as they are iterated in the Danish context. Cultural Radicalism has a complex history in Denmark dating back to the late 19th century and is according to Michael Fjeldsøe connected to a set of disparate ideologies. The most important of these in the present context would be functionalism in art, modernism understood as artistic progressiveness, cultural sociology as the link between art and emancipation, modern urbanity as a cosmopolitan outlook, leftism, and an individual

[52] The term Grundtvigianism originates from N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), a writer, priest and politician (among other things) who was one of the most influential figures in the development and promotion of the Danish people's enlightenment movement. Grundtvigianism was deeply informed by Herder (Hastrup 2004, 32).

engagement in and responsibility towards the welfare society (Fjeldsøe 2013, 21).[53] It is important to note that Cultural Radicalism from the outset was a bourgeois enterprise that set itself apart from the social democratic and communist base in the working classes. Even if it was to some degree leftist (and became Marxist in some post-1968 versions) it was originally focused on the emancipation of the *individual* as a way to build better citizens for the state.

Through these diverse strands a Danish cultural policy was consolidated where the general agreement was that the dissemination of fine arts would

> […] cultivate citizens capable of reasoning and arguing for themselves, of finding their own way in the increasingly complex modern society and participating in the development of the welfare state. (Duelund 2003, 42)

Within the welfare state and after the formation of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1961, the idea that public and political participation would rest in part on the education of citizens by means of fine arts thus became a firmly established consensus in Danish cultural policy. This consensus included

> […] all the political parties – from the left wing to liberals, neoliberals and conservatives – [who] agreed to work for the goals of enlightenment for individual dignity and of education for developing democratic citizens. The means should be dissemination of the fine arts to all social groups and geographic areas. (Duelund 2001, 41)

By the mid-1960s and early 1970s it was realised that this strategy did not have the desired effect. Participation in cultural activities was low, audiences were mainly the well-educated middle to higher income groups (Duelund 2003, 59, see also Ørum 2016) and such cultural activity was largely concentrated in the major towns and cities. Consequently, the idea that culture was largely to be associated with the fine arts (in need of democratisation) gradually gave way to an understanding of culture as "a process in which we are all participating" (Duelund 2001, 43).[54] In the foreword to a report to

[53] Fjeldsøe primarily describes the Cultural Radicalism of the inter-war period and not its revitalisation in the wake the student revolt in 1968 (Duelund 2001, 39) and its subsequent alignment Marxism and the Frankfurt School in the 1970s. This is of course of importance for a discussion of the relations and valuations of fine arts vis-à-vis mass culture in capitalist democracies.

[54] The quotation marks in Duelund around "a process in which we all take part" (Duelund 2003, 45) and "a process in which we are all participating" (Duelund 2001, 43), strongly suggest that the quote should appear directly in the social liberal minister of culture, Kristen Helveg Petersen's report to parliament "Betænkning 517" (Petersen 1969). However it seems that they are Duelund's own paraphrases and that the report does not put it as bluntly as that. Duelund is

parliament from 1969, "Betænkning 517", Minister of cultural affairs Kristen Helveg Petersen writes:

> The report does not try to define a concept of culture. In connection to this, it is reasonable to underline that it has hitherto been a characteristic of the cultural debate that art and culture have often been equated.
>
> This makes cultural debate too narrow and closed. Art, and the opportunities for expression that is connected to it are important sides of cultural life, but there are others too.
>
> Apart from the efforts to strengthen the artistic development, the goal of a diverse cultural policy has to encompass many other efforts at promoting the opportunities for the development of the individual, its interest and participation in the shaping of our common life. (Petersen 1969, 7, my translation)[55]

This recognition turned into a policy of decentralising cultural activities and administration from a rationale resting on ideals that promoted that the decisions on cultural policy should be "made as closely as possible to the citizens concerned" (Duelund 2003, 61). It was this idea of cultural democracy that came to complement the democratisation of culture in Danish cultural policy. As such the historic Danish version of cultural democracy seems more about decentralising and vernacularizing cultural activity than about recognising cultural diversity and embracing difference. Duelund does write that the

> […] national monocultural concept was replaced by a pluralistic concept of culture, cultural democracy, and a strategy for cultural decentralization. (Duelund 2003, 43)

However, Denmark in the 1960s and 1970s was still considered as a relatively homogeneous society where the greatest social distinctions were those that could be made on the basis of geography, class and age. Issues of ethnicity, gender, diversity and identity

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right, though, to identify a shift towards a definition of culture that is more "anthropological, pluralist and proactive" (Duelund 2003, 45).

[55] Original wording in Danish: "Betænkningen rummer ikke noget forsøg på at definere kulturbegrebet. Der er i denne forbindelse grund til at understrege som noget karakteristisk for den hidtil førte kulturdebat, at der ofte sættes lighedstegn mellem kunst og kultur.

Derved bliver kulturdebatten for snæver og for lukket. Kunst og de dertil knyttede udfoldelsesmuligheder er en væsentlig side af kulturlivet, men der er andre.

Målsætningen for en alsidig kulturpolitik må, ud over bestræbelserne for at styrke den kunstneriske udvikling, omfatte mange andre bestræbelser for at fremme de enkelte menneskers udviklingsmuligheder, deres optagethed af og deltagelse i udformningen af vor fælles tilværelse."

politics with their relatively more radical claims for social change through cultural democracy still only played a small part in cultural policy. The guest workers who had arrived mainly from Turkey, The Middle East, Yugoslavia and Pakistan during the 1960s and up through the 1970s attracted very little political attention at this time and were seen mainly as "exotic additions, spicing up urban space" (Holm Pedersen 2011, 14 in Ringsager 2015, 55, my translation). The Danish deployment of cultural democracy into concrete policy still sat tightly within the frame of the nation as a complex mix of Grundtvigianism, social democrat labour movement ideals and Cultural Radicalism (Duelund 2003, 2001) – all under the banner of people's enlightenment. It may be argued that the development of the Danish welfare state model of cultural democracy was more prompted by the clash between ideals of modernist high art and popular mass consumption culture (Ørum 2016) than by a humanist cosmopolitan outlook. Accordingly the pluralism that Duelund ascribes to cultural democracy within Danish cultural policy is in fact relatively monocultural. It is safe to say, as Duelund remarks himself with reference to Bille, Hjorth-Andersen and Gregersen (Bille, Hjorth-Andersen, and Gregersen 2003) that up until 2002

> […] no major changes were actually made to the allocation of funding to comply with the declared new objectives […] the fact is that the major established cultural institutions still swallow up the majority of the public sector culture budget. (Duelund 2003, 46)

As outlined here, the idea of cultural democracy in Danish cultural policy became a supplementary strategy to democratisation of elitist culture (art) rather than its replacement (at the very least when applied to the museum sector). The distinctions between art institutions and non-art institutions were for the most part upheld quite rigidly, also in terms of professional art vis-à-vis amateur or folk art. As Trevor Davies remarks (Davies 2007, 13-18), the Danish Art Council's funding schemes were way into the 2000s mainly directed towards subsidising established institutions leaving issues of diversity connected to multiculturalism mainly to social and humanitarian politics, except for a few initiatives like Kulturministeriets Udviklingsfond (The Cultural Ministry's Development Fund) (1998-2001), Københavns Bymuseum (Museum of Copenhagen) and Kvindemuseet i Danmark.[56] It is telling that the Images festivals (1991-2016) and

[56] An important exception which has to be acknowledged is The Women's Museum in Denmark (Kvindemuseet i Danmark) that sprang from the feminist movement in the 1970s. It was inaugurated at grass root level in the early 1980s, housed in 1984 in central Aarhus and got its official state authorisation in 1991, two years prior the MFSK. In its original statutes it says

the CKU (Centre for Culture and Development, founded in 1998 and terminated in 2017) were both under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The fundamental arms-length idea that decisions on cultural policy should be "made as closely as possible to the citizens concerned" (Duelund 2003, 61) was for the most part interpreted along a division where the state's funding bodies for culture would support art that was in need of being democratised. On the other hand the policy of cultural democracy would mainly be implemented at municipal levels through the establishment of "community houses, support for amateur groups, media workshops" and other initiatives for the sustenance and development of individual cultures (Dorte Skot-Hansen in Davies 2007, 13, my translation)[57] It is safe to say the multicultural issues that lie at the base of Friis Møller's argument for cultural democracy were put on the agenda of official Danish cultural policy "far later than in most other European countries" (Dorte Skot-Hansen in Davies 2007, 13, my translation), and to a great extent still reside under authorities other than the Ministry of Culture.

Reforming and reformulating cultural policy

The reformulation of the MFSK strategy along the lines of relevance and cultural inclusion was set in motion by a number of things other than the change of director and the ideological discussion about democratisation of culture vis-à-vis cultural democracy. Apart from the director's wish to simply *be* more relevant and inclusive to a broader public, one of the main instigators for such debate has obviously been the 2012

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that "Common characteristics and similarities as well as differences of epoch, class, generation, and ethnicity in the patterns and situation of women's lives should appear both in the collections as a whole, as well as in singular cases of collecting and/or disseminating" (N.N. 1991, my translation). Here ethnicity is an explicit area of interest. In the most recent revision to the statutes they have changed their area of responsibility to "[…] the cultural history of gender. The museum's focus areas are gender culture, historic and present, springing from women's history, including changes in the conditions and relations of gender over time, and diversity in conditions of life across gender, sexual orientation, androgyny and ethnicity" (see http://kvindemuseet.dk/wp-content/uploads/Vedtægter-20121.pdf, accessed 25 October 2016, my translation). In the context of my argument it is further significant that The Women's Museum is a museum for cultural history that has throughout its time of operation presented a large number of thematic art exhibitions effectively blurring the boundaries between museum categories.

[57] It is equally telling here, that Kalaallit Illuutaat (The Greenlandic House) in Copenhagen, which is the central cultural institution in Denmark for the Greenlandic community, is funded by Naalakkersuisut (Government of Greenland) and the municipalities of Frederiksberg and Copenhagen and it occasionally runs projects funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior. This suggests that Greenlandic culture does not fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture eventhough it is part of Denmark's colonial past.

revision to the Danish Museum Act (Jelved 2012)[58] that in part redefined the purpose of Danish museums. In line with ICOM's museum definition reference standard[59] the Danish Museum Act §2 identifies five core tasks, the so-called museum pillars for all museums: acquisition, registration, preservation, research, and presentation.[60] However, on a closer look the 2012 revision reveals an interesting shift of focus within the prioritisation of the five pillars. Where earlier wording[61] emphasised how the five pillars were *equally* important to concepts of heritage, history, collections, documentation and their accessibility to the public and to research, the current text stresses a stronger and more direct interconnection of the five purposes. From this interconnection it moves on to specify that knowledge of the cultural heritage should be "actualised" and "made accessible and relevant [vedkommende]" and that museums are obliged to "develop the use and significance [betydning] of cultural and natural heritage" (Jelved 2014, my translation). The new Museum Act thus both enables and commits museums to put the importance of the five traditional core purposes in the ICOM reference standard definition into a hierarchy, by justifying that presentation (including exhibition, education, participation and outreach etc.) is in fact to be prioritised over the other museum core values. However minuscule this shift might seem it effectively reflects a general change in cultural policy where focus is shifting from traditional content based values in favour of an orientation towards the user. Mads Kullberg has analysed this recent development in legislation thoroughly from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage (see page 132), concluding that the interconnection of the five primary tasks of museums marks a shift that implicitly stresses how the traditional internal operations (registration, preservation and research) are now to be carried out in more dynamic relation to the external operations (exhibition, presentation) (Kullberg 2016, 75-76). He further describes how the new wording, even if it still builds on traditional principles

[58] See (Jelved 2014) for the full Museum Act.

[59] See http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/ (accessed 30 August 2016).

[60] The translation from the international reference definition into Danish is however somewhat inaccurate. The full wording of the current ICOM definition, adopted in 2007, is: "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment" (See http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/, accessed 30 August 2016).

[61] See (Mikkelsen 2006) for the previous formulation of the Museum Act.

of collection, shifts the emphasis towards current trends in recent museology highlighting experience, learning and user involvement (Kullberg 2016, 77).[62] In my opinion the most comprehensive change is the insertion of the notions of actualisation and relevance. Kullberg notes that this is indicative of a more dynamic concept of national identity and hints that it is also possibly a devaluation of traditional collection activity in favour of intangible dimensions (Kullberg 2016, 77) of cultural heritage.[63] His observation is substantiated in a report issued by the Ministry of Culture in 2011. The report, which was commissioned as a preparation for the bill leading up to the revision of the museum act,[64] identifies this change of focus from internal to external operations.

> The goal is no longer focused on the safeguarding and preservation of cultural heritage alone. The role of cultural heritage needs to be developed and cultural heritage should be an active resource in Danish society. The knowledge generated, is to be used and made relevant to citizens and society. The museums shall contribute to increase consciousness about our history and develop the population's knowledge about art, nature, culture and cultural diversity. The knowledge at museums shall put the current societal development and debate into perspective working as a raw material for the solution of societal tasks. (Kulturministeriet 2011, 17, my translation)

Here the scope widens and the report draws a direct line between cultural heritage, cultural policy and societal development that points directly to museums as important instruments for neoliberal governance as well as to an increasing focus on art's direct biopolitical potential as a social and societal instrument. It is revealing how the insertion of the notions of relevance and actualisation in the Museum Act revision describes a more fundamental change that also corresponds to the critiques forwarded by recent museology outlined in the above. In the recent British campaign #CultureMatters this change is expressed very clearly.

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[62] See also (Hooper-Greenhill 1994, 2007).

[63] The increased focus on intangibility is also partly a consequence of the 2003 UNESCO "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" (UNESCO 2003) Also available here: https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention (Accessed 8 March 2018). For a critical discussion of the implementation of the convention and the possible inherent contradictions between intangibility and preservation, see also (Kenderdine and Shaw 2017).

[64] The research for the report was conducted by a steering group comprising the head of division from the Ministry of Culture, the director of the Agency for Cultural Heritage and the directors from The National Gallery of Denmark and the National Museum of Denmark. The content of the report was discussed with a wide range of specialists and museum professionals over several meetings and workshops. A reference group of museum professionals, representatives of industry and commerce, NGOs and other appointed representatives was established, and followed the work closely.

> We believe that art and culture make life better, help to build diverse communities and improve our quality of life. Great art and culture can inspire our education system, boost our economy and give our nation international standing.[65]

Art and culture are here made instrumental in a very direct way that, if taken as a general reorientation of cultural policy on a European scale, expresses a view of culture that is radically different both from the anthropological ideas of culture connected to cultural democracy and the universalistic ideas of culture connected to democratisation of culture. If these can be said to represent different cultural paradigms it seems that we encounter a third paradigm here that can best be described by the term "expediency of culture" introduced by George Yúdice (Yúdice 2003). Yúdice defines the expediency of culture in terms of "culture as resource". He does not focus on

> […] the content of culture – that is, the model of uplift (following Arnold or Schiller) or distinction (following Bourdieu) that it offered in its traditional acceptations, or more recently its anthropologization as a whole way of life (Williams), according to which it is recognized that everyone's culture has value. (Yúdice 2003, 9)

Instead he sees how

> […] the role of culture has expanded in an unprecedented way into the political and economic at the same time that conventional notions of culture largely have been emptied out. (Yúdice 2003, 9)

For Yúdice, accelerated globalised capitalism has mobilised culture as a "resource for both sociopolitical and economic amelioration" (Yúdice 2003, 9) and culture is now defined and legitimised "based on utility" (Yúdice 2003, 11).

The idea that culture is useful is not new. What is striking in Yúdice however, is how ideas of governmentality embedded in universalistic notions of culture as well as the forms of emancipatory potential projected by anthropological conceptions seem to collapse into one other when analysed through the prism of expediency. In his analyses culture-as-expedient is in fact "conjoining what in modernity belonged to emancipation on the one hand, and to regulation on the other" (Yúdice 2003, 25). In the light of my analyses of cultural policy, current museum discourse and legislation in the above, Yúdice's concept of the expediency of culture can be said to permeate both the day-to-day operations and strategic planning at museums – even if the ideological positions presented respectively as democratisation of culture and cultural democracy are still the

[65] See http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/why-culture-matters (Accessed 11 November, 2016).

binaries that orient and structure the debate. As such the idea of expediency provides both a descriptive model and a strong analytic tool to try to pry open the ideological components of this discussion because it reveals the strong biopolitical underpinnings. Not only of the democratisation of culture, but also of the emancipatory ideologies that permeate ideas of cultural democracy. This is an important critical tool, especially since in the Danish context this expediency is now expressed by law as a fundamental principle that all public, state approved (and thus state-subsidised) museums need to follow in order to uphold their claims for relevance and, following that, their raison d'être and funding.

Yúdice mainly develops his argument along the lines of an expanded post-Fordist notion of ubiquitous capitalism including the proliferation of immaterial labour. And this ubiquitous capitalism is deeply connected to a concept of globalisation not only applied to diverse peoples and to migration, but also extending into the economic and, accordingly, political realms via supranational businesses, administrations and NGOs. It may be objected that an application of Yúdice's primarily American outlook and his innate focus on economy in late-capitalist society may seem a little crude or even somewhat incompatible with an analysis of public art museums within the Nordic model of the welfare state – where social democrat ideals for funding of the arts have traditionally had a strong foothold. However, Yúdice's idea of the expediency of culture is not limited to economic expediency but also to notions of expediency as a governmental tool, implying deep links between capital, culture and biopolitics. If culture is seen as a resource it follows that there are "specific struggles around this resource" (Yúdice 2003, 39) and accordingly, that an analysis of the art museum as a space where this struggle takes place can reveal some of the underlying assumptions and utilities ascribed to both the museum itself and its content, art.

As in the museum literature discussed above Yúdice also falls short of distinguishing between art and broader conceptions of culture. When culture itself has been emptied out such a distinction can obviously no longer exist. However, I believe that the idea of the expediency of culture used as an analytic tool offers a precise way to analyse the specific conditions under which art and politics (or, more broadly society) are interconnected at this point in history. And consequently that this analysis can bring out the underlying assumptions about how art may be ascribed both affirmative value and subversive potential by institutions and consumers alike, within the frame of contemporary

neoliberal governance. The perspective offered by the notion of expediency thus pertains to both cultural democracy and to the democratisation of culture, but in different political domains – or on different terms. It is impossible to draw a clear distinction between cultural and social politics. However, as my brief historic account of cultural democracy suggests, cultural policy in Denmark is still deeply rooted in Herderian (or Grundvigian) ideals where the democratisation of (our) culture seems to be the main objective, whilst a more inclusive notion of cultural democracy seems partly to belong to a different (more socially oriented) political domain. Boldly stated, this political distribution of democratisation of culture vis-à-vis cultural democracy reproduces the distinction between a universalistic and relativistic conception of culture that can be operationalised differently according to the political or democratic task at hand – each with its corresponding idea of expediency.

Governmentality and museology

In a 1978 lecture Michel Foucault describes how a plurality of forms of government immanent to the modern state can be described by the term governmentality. He defines governmentality as the

> […] ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security. (Foucault 1991, 102)

In the lecture he establishes government in its multiplicity (and as opposed to sovereignty) as the fundamental form of power in the modern democratic state with its population as its ultimate end. Population understood both as the subject and object of government. Government then becomes a practice of employing tactics more than applying discipline, and as such the art of government is concerned with the wellbeing of the population as a way of sustaining its own legitimacy and continuity.

> […] government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc.; and the means that the government uses to attain these ends are themselves all in some sense immanent to the population; it is the population itself on which government will act either directly through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, etc. (Foucault 1991, 100)

When the means to the end are already immanent to the population, the population itself must be seen as the broadest conceivable foundation for the possibility of government. Governmentality entails a reciprocal relation between the governing and the governed. As such it is both "internal and external to the state" (Foucault 1991, 103), describing a historical model of thought for the development of the state as the "continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not" (Foucault 1991, 103). The scope of Foucault's concept of governmentality is far-reaching. Making the means of government indirect and immanent to the population entails that culture becomes a resource for government and a zone of contestation in which the struggle for the definition of the relations between state and individual (and ultimately, the definition of the state) takes place. The relation between government and population is redefined since it is no longer only the population that is the target of government.

> One governs things. But what does this mean? I do not think this is a matter of opposing things to men, but rather of showing that what government has to do with is not territory but rather a sort of complex composed of men and things. The things with which in this sense government is to be concerned are in fact men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc.; men in their relation to that other kind of things, customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking etc.; lastly, men in relation to that other kind of things, accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc. (Foucault 1991, 93)

Government is thus a subtle deployment of tactics with the rational aim of organising the most appropriate relations between things and subjects in order to sustain and increase the wellbeing of the population. It is no longer the imposition of law on the individual. Rather, it is a way of organising or managing "through a multiform of tactics" and in a way where, "through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved" (Foucault 1991, 95).

Within this conception of governmentality the public museum becomes an important site for such organising. Both in terms of promoting the legitimacy of government to the population – and in terms of sustaining the well-being of the population. For sociologist and museum scholar Tony Bennett this strategy dates back to the mid nineteenth century where it became understood that museums and cultural institutions were not only spaces offered to regulate and improve the "morals and manners of the population" (Bennett 1995, 20). From then on public museums became governmental instruments

to produce "individuals who did not *want* to besot themselves in alehouses" (Bennett 1995, 20). From here on high culture became a

> […] resource that might be used to regulate the field of social behaviour in endowing individuals with new capacities for self-monitoring and self-regulation that the field of culture and modern forms of liberal government most characteristically interrelate. (Bennett 1995, 20)

The general idea that the enlightenment of the population as a governmental tactic would increase well-being and thus affirm the power of the state and produce more productive citizens seems very much in line with the previously described Danish cultural policy of democratisation of culture. The role of museums in society had been debated since the mid nineteenth century as "an instrument for the democratic education of the 'masses', or the 'citizen'" as museologist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill dubs it (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 190).[66] This included perspectives on the contradictory relation of preservation to (living) culture (Adorno 1981); on the deflation of the idea of the museum as a representational space in the wake of postmodernism (Crimp 1980); and from anthropological perspectives on how the visitor's conduct in and experience of the museum are socially as well as materially regulated (Duncan and Wallach 1980). However, it was not until the late 1980s that the level of reflexivity within museology reached critical mass and produced the so called New Museology, which reflected the political role of museums in society from *within* the museum community itself.

In the introduction to one the first anthologies that put 'new' in front of museology, Peter Vergo states that if museology had hitherto been mostly concerned with the internal operations the museum then the new museology would be more interested in a

> […] subtext comprising innumerable diverse, often contradictory strands, woven from the wishes and ambitions, the intellectual or political or social or educational aspirations and preconceptions of the museum director, the curator, the scholar, the designer, the sponsor – to say nothing of the society, the political or social or educational system which nurtured all these people and in so doing left its stamp upon them. (Vergo 1989, 3)

[66] Hooper-Greenhill's account of the prehistory of the modern museum is very much indebted to Foucault, presenting it as a history of the entwinement of knowledge and power up until the establishment of the Louvre as a public museum after the French Revolution.

This change in museology's subject matter is part of the larger reconfiguration of the human and social sciences at the time, which also prompts and coincides with changes within the museum community itself. In 1992 Eilean Hooper-Greenhill writes:

> The last few years have seen a major shifting and reorganisation of museums. Change has been extreme and rapid, and, to many people who loved museums as they were, this change has seemed unprecedented, unexpected, and unacceptable. It has thrown previous assumptions about the nature of museums into disarray. (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 1)

The important insight that Hooper-Greenhill extends to museum studies is that reason and truth – following Foucault – are "relative, rather than absolute concepts" that both have "historical, social, and cultural contexts" (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 9). From this perspective of "effective history" (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 9-12) she engages in rewriting the prehistory of the modern public museum.[67] While her account is both historically dense and compelling it lacks a critical discussion of her Foucauldian point of departure, especially of the reciprocity between the self and the state and the complex processes of subjectification this involves. Eventhough she hints at a less strict division between producer and consumer by the end of the book ((Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 200), the 'top-down' perspective on power and knowledge that she suggests (to which I think Foucault himself would have objected) renders the theoretical scope of her book somewhat unsatisfactory as a tool to analyse the complexities with which knowledge and power are produced, exchanged and sustained at museums in contemporary society. However, as an historical document her book is interesting. In the final chapter she engages with the changes that museum institutions were undergoing by the early 1990s and she lists a whole range of initiatives that challenge the historic knowledge/power distribution and the possible subject positions she has carefully constructed as historical throughout the book.[68] Among other things she notices how meaning is no longer constructed in linear coherencies or ordered taxonomies, but also is presented as broken,

[67] Hooper-Greenhill describes the public museum in the modern age by the example of the Louvre in the chapter "The disciplinary museum" (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 167-190). In her account the disciplinary museum is a space where specialised curatorial knowledge is developed and presented for the public, thus enabling a strict division between producers and consumers as the basic social structure governing the power relations produced and maintained by the museum (even if the museum's collections would represent the "liberation from tyrants and oppressors" (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 1995)).

[68] This leads Hooper-Greenhill to a philosophical entanglement that she is not able to account for fully within her theoretical framework. In the final chapter her interpretation of the term "effective history" is activated, not only as a tool for discourse analysis, but also as offering the

multipronged and heterogeneous; how museums are increasingly becoming places for leisure and entertainment instead of education and contemplation; how digital interactive exhibits allow users to determine the dimensions of their visit; how ideas have become the primary resource instead of objects; and finally how "[t]he age of the passive visitor has passed, to be superseded by the age of the active and discriminating 'consumer' or 'client'"(Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 211) with whom the museum has a contract and a reciprocal relationship instead of a position of power of admittance.[69]

If Hooper-Greenhill seems to reverse the order of Vergo's argument, placing more importance on the historic and political discourses that affect day to day museum operations than on the individuals working within these discourses and the subjects they produce, then Tony Bennett's approach to Foucault leans more on the reciprocity of subjectification processes and on ideas of the museum as a form of governmentality that is not necessarily disciplinary in a traditional sense. In his 1988 essay, "The Exhibitionary Complex" (Bennett 1988, later to be included in Bennett 1995), he proposes to examine exhibiting as "a set of cultural technologies concerned to organize a voluntarily self-regulating citizenry" (Bennett 1988, 76). Bennett's primary concerns are museums of natural history and ethnographic museums since in his account it was mainly here that the ideological battles of representation within the development of modern western democracies became visible, as the negotiation between culture and nature, between the west and its others, between order and chaos. His main conclusion is that in this battle museums developed as public institutions that were

precondition for an emancipatory return to the objects and to a "radical potential for material culture" (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 215). She suggests that since truth and reason are endlessly constructed and rewritten the condition of possibility for "an environment where both the 'learning' subject and the 'teaching' subject have equal powers" (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 214) has become possible. This equality of powers undermines her theoretical argument to such an extent that it leads her to the suggestion (typical of the period) that the modern age may have come to its end and is being replaced the postmodern.

[69] Hooper-Greenhill's book thus reads best as a reaction against the traditional museology of her time to take properly into account the social constructions of knowledge and power enacted at and by museums and as a documentation of the new trends in museology at the time. Looking at the MFSK's founding director Marianne Bech's account of the early years of the museum (Bech 2016) (or at The Women's Museum in Denmark as I touched on in the above) also substantiates that a larger reconfiguration of museum values and a reaction against the then contemporary museum scene, which was seen as stagnating, were core concerns for progressive museum professionals in that period.

> […] embodiments, both material and symbolic, of a power to 'show and tell' which, being deployed in a newly constituted open and public space, sought rhetorically to incorporate the people within the processes of the state. (Bennett 1988, 99)

This incorporation was mainly brought to effect by the organisation of museological taxonomies and architectural space in ways which sought to construct the populace as homogeneous despite the obvious heterogeneities in the 19th Century class society. This happened at the expense of any possible 'other' and it was only by the citizens' voluntary adjustment to socially acceptable conduct that such an idea of homogeneity could be upheld. As Bennett concludes, for those who

> […] failed to be won in the new pedagogic relations between state and people symbolized by the open doors of the museum, the closed walls of the penitentiary threatened a sterner instruction in the lessons of power. Where instruction and rhetoric failed, punishment began. (Bennett 1988, 99-100)

Hooper-Greenhill's and Bennett's accounts are mainly historical and account for the role of the public museum under what Foucault would call sovereignty or early liberal governance, which is what allows them to put such emphasis on the notion of discipline in the case of Bennett and on power as non-reciprocal in Hooper-Greenhill. As such their accounts correspond with what they saw to be the challenges of museums by the end of the 1980s: a rapidly changing society where such distribution of power/knowledge seemed, in the wake of postmodernism, to have become anachronistic and called for change in the level of theoretical reflection. As analyses of the museum's relation to society their work is of immense importance to my present purposes. Yet in order to theorise our present situation, including the discussions of both cultural democracy and expediency presented in the above, I would like to extend and update their engagement with Foucauldian governmentality to meet the present political and societal reality that museums find themselves in.[70]

Cultural democracy and biopolitics

Following Foucault (Foucault 1991), governmentality in modern society is not merely characterised by the exercise of state sovereignty nor the disciplinary acts of the state *on* its subjects. It is also a tactical and continuous construction of social reality where

[70] On a note of fairness to Hooper-Greenhill and Bennett it should be mentioned that eventhough Foucault develops his concept of a contemporary neoliberal biopolitics in his lectures at Collége de France as early as in 1978-79, these lectures were not published in book form until 2004 with an English translation being issued in 2008 (Foucault 2008).

the relationship between those governing and those governed is reciprocal (though not always symmetrical). If this is the case, then it follows that the distribution of power and knowledge also needs to include appropriate possible spaces for political dissent and alternative imaginaries. For a museum's engagement with subversive art practices this means that even if at first these practices may seem to be at odds with government's embodiment in the state and its institutions, they are also needed to legitimise the government's actions. As Foucault remarks upon summarising his lectures in 1979, liberalism

> […] is not a dream that comes up against a reality and fails to insert itself within it. It constitutes – and this is the reason for both its polymorphism and its recurrences – a tool for the criticism of reality: criticism of a previous governmentality from which one is trying to get free; of a present governmentality that one is trying to reform and rationalize by scaling it down; or of a governmentality to which one is opposed and whose abuses one wants to limit. So, in different but simultaneous forms, it will be possible to find liberalism both as a regulative schema of governmental practice and as a sometimes radical oppositional theme. (Foucault 2008, 320)

To Foucault this "'strategic reversibility'[71] of power relations" (Gordon 1991, 5) is a characteristic of modern biopolitics which "generates a new kind of counter-politics" (Gordon 1991, 5). This means that power must be analysed as the "way in which certain actions modify others" (Foucault 1982, 788). Power in the late Foucault does not equal the exercise of violence or dominance (even if they can be elements) but is rather defined as a "relationship" and exercise of "an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or in the future" (Foucault 1982, 789). This is where the notion of *tactic* becomes important to understand the implications of Foucault's concept of biopolitics. Good government becomes the deployment of tactical measures with the aim of making subjects inclined to a government of the self and for their own good – in ways that will comply with an overall policy. As James Hay has remarked:

> […] a neoliberal form of governance assumes that social subjects are not and should not be subject to direct forms of state control, it relies upon mechanisms for governing "through society," through programs that shape, guide, channel—and upon *responsible*, self-disciplining social subjects'. (Hay 2003, 166)

[71] It is unclear to me where (if anywhere) Foucault uses the exact phrasing 'strategic reversibility' that Gordon's use of inverted commas seems to indicate as being a citation.

The concept of self-disciplining is interesting when returning to the discussion of culture in the context of museum discourse. By the concept of self-disciplining we should be able to see that the emancipatory promise projected by ideals of cultural participation and cultural democracy, as they were presented in the above, has an opposite side. This other side can in fact be seen as a form of biopolitical tactic that imbricates dissent within neoliberal governmentality as a means of both exerting *and* legitimising political power by recognising the action of the possible dissident as legitimate.[72] This view also leaves the previously discussed concept of the expediency of culture in a kind of 'double bind'. In this double bind, culture is not only expedient as a resource for "sociopolitical and economic amelioration" (Yúdice 2003, 9), but also expedient as a strategy for controlling cultural dissent in the processes of legitimising power. In this light it becomes clearer, at least speculatively, why the political rationale behind such governmental forms of cultural democracy that rest on the most radical ideas of difference (associated with postcolonialism, feminism etc.) predominantly have been a tactic of social policy. And conversely, how cultural policy historically has dealt tactically with cultural democracy as a strategy to legitimise, in the eyes of the broad public, further spending for the arts in order to cater to the demands of a cultural elite. These complex mechanisms of subjectification with the aim of self-disciplining can be theorised by way of the term social technology. Insofar as cultural production within the museum context becomes a form of acting upon the actions of others, it constitutes a social technology by its specific institutionalised forms of sociality – or, codes of conduct. Within this frame the idea of democratic participation itself becomes a way of qualifying the human capital of the individual in the post-Fordist immaterial labour economy even if it may also show genuine intentions to construct new commonalities or envision alternative ways of living.

Such intentions can be described by the "counter-politics" (Gordon 1991, 5) or "the sometimes radical oppositional theme" (Foucault 2008, 320) inherent in Foucault's idea of liberalism – as a constant struggle for the definition of what constitutes legitimate discourse. Here George Yúdice makes an interesting reading of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault where he claims that neoliberalism has more or less taken up the space

[72] A similar idea can be expressed by the concept of repressive tolerance introduced by Herbert Marcuse in 1965 (Marcuse 1965), although founded on a more Marxist conception of power as concentrated and disciplinary.

for possible radical opposition as an integral part of its own governmental schema. His reading of Butler rests mainly on her idea of disidentification by which the transgressive agency of the individual that "fails to repeat loyally" (Butler 2011, 167) has the potential to negotiate or subvert marginalised identities. Yúdice's argument however also rests on the observation that even if other and unoccupied positions are still thinkable and possible, such marginalised identities as would previously have been compelled to performatively transgress the norm have now been subjected to a generalisation of cultural values. This means that the performance of dissent has been generalised mainly by the identification with stereotypes spread by mass media, global capitalism, the welfare state, NGOs, and the political systems. This results in undifferentiated political views and prejudices produced and sustained by the very historicity of ongoing cultural conflicts. Quoting Michael Warner, Yúdice states that liberal pluralism "has projected a "fantasized space where all embodied identities could be visibly represented as parallel forms of identity"" (Warner 1993 in Yúdice 2003, 50) and where this "overarching social fantasy […] compels us to perform conformity with and rejection of a series of roles and identities" (Yúdice 2003, 51). Because it rests on this generalised fantasy, any subversive performativity in the expedient regime of culture is then turned into a "social imperative to perform" (Yúdice 2003, 40-81) conformity. This condition permeates contemporary cultural life and becomes more or less a dead end where the radical potential for transgressive agency that can be read from Butler becomes nothing less than a performance of already institutionalised dissent subsumed by already institutionalised discourses of power/knowledge. Yúdice does contend that this fantasy differs and that social meaning is constructed differently across social or geographical groups[73] as well as the differences between a group and the overarching norms it differs from have become its political claim for "recognition and resources" (Yúdice 2003, 56). The important thing is that even if there are social and geographical differences then the idea of culture as a resource makes difference phantasmagorical in the sense where the transgressive agency of performativity in Butler becomes subsumed and appropriated by neoliberal biopolitical agendas. Here the technology of self assumed by Foucault to be the prime way of subjectivation is precisely this *individual* agency that identifies and

[73] In fact, these differences are the subject matter of the remainder of Yúdice's book where he traces the special conditions under which culture has become expedient and imbued with a social imperative to perform.

disidentifies with the distribution of power/knowledge. As such it makes the subject able to navigate ever more complex social realities. Transferring this line of thought to the sphere of artistic or curatorial criticism and intervention means that implicitly it will always reinforce the very structures it is critical of while attempting to transgress them. What also emerges from Yúdice's Foucauldian reading of Butler is a deep split between *two* contrasting and yet intersecting ways of construing cultural democracy. On the one hand, cultural democracy is both an ideological advocacy promoting an emancipatory democratic potential and a consensus-based vision of equality *within* diversity (as in Friis Møller's reading of its postcolonial version). On the other it is a form of governmentality that is enacted *through* institutions where the projection of emancipation is already codified, regulated and modelled on certain generalised fantasies of identity as well as institutionalised codes of conduct. In this latter conception the idea of cultural democracy easily becomes yet another a social technology of government, where within the arts institutions artistic and curatorial critique functions as generalised dissent that only affirms and reinforces what it tries to criticise.

Contemporary art and antagonism

Returning to the opening discussion of the exhibition *Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.*, our original and somewhat naïve idea of turning the museum into several public participatory workshop spaces during the entire exhibition period, the content of which would be prompted by what the public would see as relevant to *them*, crumbled as it met the everyday pragmatics of the museum and of exhibition making. And as we gradually realised, the complexity of our initial ambitions. The reasons were several. The exhibition was planned on a very tight budget and within an even tighter time frame that necessitated the creation of a more workable concept, which would be quicker and more immediate to realise, let alone manage compared to the very open, inclusive, democratic, and user-driven concept we discussed at our initial meetings. We needed more time than we had to envision the concept properly. The original idea would probably have meant that we would have had to sustain irregular and fluid opening hours in order to facilitate and engage with processes that would meet the needs of our users within their leisure time. At the same time the museum would also have to maintain fixed opening hours for regular museum visitors. Being a small museum with limited staffing we did not have the manpower or economy to accommodate the fluidity that the concept would demand.

Adding to this we also could not imagine how to present the idea of the workshops and the user-generated content to the regular museum visitors – the people coming in from the street expecting to see an exhibition of artworks. We simply knew too little of what to anticipate from potential users participating in potential workshops in terms of how they would want to engage with the museum and what kinds of content this would generate. Put simply, the concept would make us unable to control what, if anything, we would be able to show in the galleries during regular opening hours. This situation pointed out very clearly that curatorial choices were necessary – also for any form of bottom-up, participatory or distributed and relational knowledge production to happen within the institutional context of the museum. Furthermore, if the workshop participants were to determine when, how, where and what to work with, we were anxious that only communicating the idea of an open and inclusive museum would not be enough to get the regular visitors in. Our worry was that the inclusion of one group of museum users would in fact be the exclusion of another. This problem highlighted that the ideas of distributed and relative knowledge that we wanted to apply in the name of cultural democracy were in fact at risk of producing a highly internal, navel-gazing and elitist exhibition that we would be unable to communicate and extend to non-participants. The ideological beliefs in cultural democracy was up against our users' expectations of the museum as a curated space, or a place for the democratisation of culture, where you go to learn about what someone has picked out for you to see.

Our concrete ideas for the workshops were also too vague. Partly because we could not solve the challenge of asking the audience how they imagined their ideal museum while at the same time having to pick out and engage with the artists we wanted to facilitate the workshops and other activities. What would the precise role of the artists be? How would their specific and personal practice and expertise be of significance? It was clear that focusing solely on artists whose expertise would be the facilitation of participatory workshops more or less regardless of content would drastically narrow down the field of artists to pick from. It would also grossly misrepresent our ideas about presenting artistic themes and methods as the very specialised, skilled and diverse processes they are. In other words, our idea would have rendered the very artistic themes and processes insignificant to an extent where we would betray our own conviction that they could at all be relevant to the public. It would have made the artistic work secondary to our intentions and to the institution and thus undermine any claim that artistic work can

have value outside of such an institutional framing. Ultimately our concept was at danger of reducing the artist to a skilled worker carrying out an assigned job for the museum. This I would contend, would be the end of any art institution as well as displaying an uncritical embracement of the neoliberal biopolitics that underpin the notion of art and culture as expedient resources. Ironically, the original radicalism of our concept would partly undermine the idea the *art* museum. If a fundamental characteristic of artistic practice is that it produces and communicates something in a specific way –at the very least as opposed to any other possible way – then museums and museum curators have the task of making this precision possible and visible. This highlights the fact that we were not able to realise our ambition simply by relinquishing our own curatorial authority or by handing it over to the public – rather the situation proved the contrary. Our own deliberate choice was necessary in order to be able to present anything whatsoever, even if we wanted to stage participation as that which was presented. At this very simple level, ideas of user involvement and user-generated content as a public demand-strategy to increase relevance in the name of cultural democracy were in very stark contrast to the specifics of both curatorial choice and artistic work. Failing to make the necessary curatorial choices would indeed make the exhibition subject to what architect and cultural theorist Markus Miessen's has critiqued as consensus-seeking participation. In this critique he has pointed out that

> […] the "notion of the curatorial" by default presents us with the opposite of what one might call "the romantic participatory" as it embodies decision-making from the outside. (Miessen 2010, 49)[74]

To Miessen the point of criticising participation as a romantic aspiration is that this very outside, which may in this case be constituted by the artistic statement or the curatorial

[74] Markus Miessen is inspired by Chantal Mouffe's ideas of affective antagonism and the 'constitutive outside', which are central elements of her critique of the consensus seeking rationality of liberal democracy. Though I do not explore Mouffe's ideas explicitly in the following, the central concept of antagonism that I develop as a necessary precondition for a meaningful way of construing cultural democracy within the context of the art museum is deeply indebted to Mouffe's thought as presented in the book *Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically* (Mouffe 2013). It also remains outside the scope of my text to explore whether her concept of agonism which is described as a "struggle between adversaries" (Mouffe 2013, 7) is applicable to the field of contemporary art or whether in fact the more oppositional concept of antagonism described as the "struggle between enemies" (Mouffe 2013, 7) serves better to describe the mechanisms of exclusion created equally by the institutionalised hegemonic professional arts discourse and the conservative political claims that advanced contemporary art is elitist and therefore should not be a matter of public spending.

choice, is needed as an antagonistic force in order to allow for participation to be about anything other than itself.

Returning to the discussion of a possible paradigm shift within museums introduced in the opening pages of this chapter, it seems that both the pragmatic institutional context as well as its theoretical and historical support is far more complex than a move from an outdated A (democratisation of culture) to a new and reinvigorating B (cultural democracy). In my analyses I have shown that the values ascribed to the respective positions in the dichotomy between democratisation of culture and cultural democracy rest on historic usage rather than conceptual or discursive clarity, and that cultural democracy itself is an incoherent and complex concept. If so-called high art, aesthetic autonomy and elitism was what we wanted to depart from, the destination at which we wanted to arrive was all over the place. Cultural democracy can be seen as a political answer and legitimising strategy reflecting the conflation of high art and mass culture since the 1960s; an emancipatory and generalised idealism emanating from debates on identity and cultural representation in the 1980s; a socio-political tool rather than a matter of cultural policy; and finally, a mode of neoliberal governmentality where the promise of emancipation works as a social technology of self-disciplining affirmative of the existing economy and power/knowledge distribution. In the latter view the function of the museum in society does not differ much from what new museology set out to criticise in the late 1980s in terms of reproducing societal and economic power structures. It is the overall political landscape that has changed.

As hinted by the above description of why we abandoned our original ideas, the overall issues at stake are those of artistic content and curatorial choice in the face of cultural democracy and participatory strategies. The rather pessimistic promise for museums, curatorship and contemporary art that follow from George Yúdice's conflation of affirmation and dissent cannot be neglected in this context. However, it is important to note that the "radical oppositional theme" (Foucault 2008, 320) that Foucault ascribes to liberal governmentality as one of its driving forces is not a dream that comes short in the face of reality but rather "a tool for the criticism of reality" (Foucault 2008, 320) that simultaneously constructs this reality through its reciprocal relation with existing, regulating power/knowledge formations. It is important to locate cultural democracy in concrete contexts instead of on the general discursive level. As my analyses indicate the historical and theoretical ideas of cultural democracy's emancipatory claims seem

to rest on general assumptions and universalising concepts of difference and discursive formations as variegated and general as elite/mass culture, postcolonial theory, late-capitalist individualism, national social and cultural policy as well as the Danish welfare model. These all become points of departure for cultural democracy's opposition to democratisation of culture. As such, cultural democracy can be described quite precisely by George Yúdice's idea of a generalised and "overarching social fantasy that compels us to perform conformity with and rejection of a series of roles and identities" (Yúdice 2003, 51). In prolongation hereof it can be argued that cultural democracy rests on ethical claims and consensus-based ideologies that promote equality *within* diversity. The counter-politics needed to criticise such a reality obviously have to be more specific and local rather than general and global.

Cultural democracy is not fostered or attained by focusing on promoting it as an overarching concept – rather it can be enacted and investigated by inserting antagonistic features, by challenging existent structures and power/knowledge formations and by providing the circumstances under which discourse can develop from and within specific empirical contexts. Following Marcus Miessen it can even be argued that the curatorial choice and/or the artwork itself might constitute the exact antagonistic outside necessary for participation and cultural democracy to develop in a meaningful way. Accordingly the contradiction between democratisation of culture and cultural democracy collapses in a certain sense – and cultural democracy itself becomes a form of enlightenment project projecting the democratisation of a certain cultural and institutional perspective. However, if we retain the belief that artistic and curatorial practices and choices constitute a specific a mode of critical address then rather than speaking about a paradigm shift it seems that it would instead be productive to debate the maintenance of and continuous critical engagement with the contradictions between democratisation of culture and cultural democracy. That is, between individual and distributed knowledge, politics and aesthetics, as well as between the potential for artistic or curatorial practice to enact skilled criticality and the political imperative for broader cultural participation. If we do not deny the cultural and historical specificity of the exhibition as a medium and art as a critical mode of address then the *conflict* between these contrasting ideas of culture and democracy and their related paradigmatic modes of knowledge can be precisely what generates the potential in *each concrete situation* for any museum of contemporary art to be relevant to its public. In other words a move

from generalised consensus-seeking participation towards distinctive context-bound antagonistic tension is necessary.

Throughout the chapter the reader may have felt an underlying belief in or wish for the possibility of arts practice, curatorship and museums to be able to criticise or subvert the very same forms of governmentality and power/knowledge formations they simultaneously affirm. If the autonomy accorded to art at the modernist museum seemed too elitist then the construction of a neoliberalist biopolitical stasis that follows from reading Yúdice, in which culture is emptied of its content seems too pessimistic. For the museum the issue of relevance has to be located somewhere in between the statement of the individual artwork and an institutional framing that allows for possible spaces of antagonism and creation aimed at challenging the institution itself. It has also been my underlying assumption that a museum of contemporary art is relevant alone by the intervention of its content. If contemporary art is not relevant to contemporary society then the rationale behind a museum for contemporary art as well as behind contemporary art itself would disappear. This endows a very special status to (contemporary) art as that which cannot (or will not) fully comply with George Yúdice's idea that the expediency of culture has emptied out its content and made it subservient to other agendas. Admittedly this view is reminiscent of the elitist and universalistic conceptions of culture and the autonomy of art associated with modernism, its institutions, and its ideals. However, as Mikkel Bolt recently pointed out, it is important in this context to acknowledge that the autonomy of contemporary art is indeed a *relative* autonomy as it is both inside and partially outside the capitalist logic of production and administration (Bolt 2016, 19-20). Bolt contends that it is this "partial separation, the relative autonomy, that still harnesses art with a transgressive potential" (Bolt 2016, 20, my translation).[75] He goes on to stress that in most cases this transgressive potential has been stifled by showing and exhibiting political statements within the comfortable frame of the art institution, thus partly affirming consensus instead of proposing forms of genuine political activism or dissent. Bolt rhetorically asks whether it still makes sense to play the "transformative game" *within* the institutions. Thus implying that it is outside and on the margins of the arts institutions that art can have the potential to

[75] Original wording in Danish: "Og denne partielle adskillelse, den relative autonomi, udstyrer stadigvæk kunsten med et transgressivt potentiale."

"establish the necessary radical critique of art and capitalism" (Bolt 2016, 53, my translation).[76] I would argue that contemporary art has this potential within the institutional frame too. But only insofar as the institutions are willing, ready and able to welcome and accept the changes that the critique would necessitate. Furthermore, I would argue that the institutions are also a necessary element for this critique in order to bring it to broader public consciousness.

Similar to Bolt's, a Marxist inspired analysis of the contemporary art scene has been carried out by Boris Groys, who describes the artwork in the context of the museum through the notion of the "paradox-object" and the field of art as "strictly structured according to the logic of contradiction" (Groys 2008, 2) as he suggests in his 2008 book, *Art Power*. In this book Groys uses modern and contemporary art more or less interchangeably as he sees them as fundamentally pluralistic. Concepts (or traditions) of both modern and contemporary art and their ensuing artworks and practices (including curatorial practice) embody their own commodification as they simultaneously offer a critique of this commodification. This essentially Hegelian idea of expanded artistic practice as a thesis-antithesis dialectic constitutes the paradoxical condition of contemporary art as that which needs to maintain a semi-autonomous position in order to remain part of the very art market which concurrently negates the conditions of possibility of such a position. According to Groys, the failure to fully embrace this contradiction and "unwillingness to accept paradoxical, self-contradictory interpretations as adequate and true" is what prevents us from seeing "modern and contemporary art for what it is, namely a site of revelation of the paradox governing the balance of power" (Groys 2008, 4). Within this paradox the traditional idea of museums as "repositories of historical memory" (Groys 2008, 21) becomes crucial in the face of contemporary claims for the "abandonment of the "musealized" past [which] is also often celebrated as a radical opening up to the present" (Groys 2008, 20). Contrarily, Groys argues that "only the museum gives the observer the opportunity to differentiate between old and new,

[76] Original wording in Danish: "Det er klart, at kun kunst, der positionerer sig i marginen eller uden for kunstinstitutionen, kan være med til at etablere den nødvendige radikale kritik af kunsten og kapitalismen. Vi er nødt til at spørge os selv, om det stadigvæk giver mening at spille det transformative spil inden for institutionerne."

past and present" (Groys 2008, 21) and that this historical comparison is always necessary when trying to address issues of power, cultural identity and cultural difference as a way to "generate the present" (Groys 2008, 21).

Following this, the museum *has* to be a curated space and cannot fully embrace radical suggestions of cultural democracy. The opposition between the curatorial and the participatory identified by Markus Miessen (Miessen 2010, 49) has to be upheld in order not to empty either of its potentials. Importantly, it is not just the history of artists and artworks but also that of exhibitions and curatorial practice itself that forms the foundation of Groys' argument. Such an expanded view of the historicity of the field I would claim is necessary in all its internal contradictions if we are to maintain the relevance of contemporary art and its museums. On the issue of democratisation of culture vis-à-vis cultural democracy it is not a simple either/or, nor a question of replacing one with the other. Both propositions would ultimately undermine the museum as a knowledge institution as well as curating and fine arts as professional practices and specific modes of critical inquiry, which in this view is the whole raison d'être for art and museums in the first place. Following Groys, the question becomes one of a continuous questioning and exploration of how, where and why these conflicting discourses intersect and diverge. And thereby also an examination of, and experimentation with, how power and knowledge are constantly (re)distributed and (re)negotiated under *specific* circumstances – in this case, at the museum which is always already part of history and society. In other words we need to take up the meticulous task of questioning the differences within difference – of asking Ahmed's difficult question about "which differences matter here?" (Ahmed 1998, 191) in order to qualify the conflicting discourses within the current museum landscape. In other words, the generalised view of culture as expedient and emptied out, which paves the way for the argument that dissent is always already generalised needs to be replaced by a specific inquiry into the agonistic and antagonistic forces that structure every cultural event – not to reach any form of consensus, but rather to tease out the antagonisms. These antagonisms are necessary as the stuff that feeds participation and structures its debates.

5. Sound and situation

In 2015 I was the curator of American artist Kabir Carter's project *Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field* [hereafter *WGSEF*][77] consisting of a series of activities carried out in and around Copenhagen and Roskilde. The *WGSEF* is an ongoing project and this was Carter's second iteration of it. The first had taken place in Istanbul and subsequent to our collaboration he has continued the activities of *WGSEF* in other locations and contexts with other curators and participants. The Copenhagen and Roskilde part of the project consisted of a series of workshops, listening sessions, screenings, reading sessions, discussions, presentations, excursions, and other activities over the course of eight weeks. It focused on sound from a number of different angles, at different locations, and involved a number of different collaborators and participants. Our three-month period of collaboration was concluded with an exhibition in Husarstalden at the MFSK, which we aimed to present as a continuation and extension of the activities of the *WGSEF* into the format of a gallery exhibition. This conversion of project-based work into the more artwork-like format of an installation, and the relations, borders and transitions between project based work and the exhibition space will be the topics for Chapter 6.

In the present chapter I discuss how sound and participation within project based artistic and curatorial work intersect with ideas of listening and the sonic artwork and how these ideas might productively be rerouted through the notion of the situation[78] as a productive tool for curatorial practice. My motivation to engage with Carter and the *WGSEF* came from a wish to address the questions of participation connected to current

[77] The project has a Facebook profile: https://www.facebook.com/Working-Group-for-Sound-in-the-Expanded-Field-304230982932412/ (accessed 10 March 2019).

[78] Although cultural politics and critique are important elements of my discussions I do not employ the term situation with reference to the revolutionary liberatory potential and the conflation of art and life as imagined by the Situationist International. For a discussion of that see (Bolt 2004). However, some of the examples I discuss in the dissertation are of course inspired by situationism. In Chapter 5 I address Claus Haxholm and Tobias R. Kirstein's practice of *Aggressive Listening*, which is explicitly referenced by Kirstein as inspired by the situationist *derive* (see page 128). Andreas Führer's piece *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or?* that I addressed in Chapter 2 also has connections to Situationism. Being a soundwalk in an urban environment connects it to the situationist *derive* by sidestepping everyday modes of engagement with the city soundscape and by drawing attention to sounds that are usually ignored. However, my use of the term situation is more invested in denaturalizing such avant-garde discourses (see page 112) in order to apply the term as an analytical and descriptive tool. Thus my application of the situation is a theoretical gesture made in order to describe the relation between artworks, contexts, perception and signification.

museum debates from the relational perspectives of sound and listening. The juxtaposition of cultural democracy with curatorial choice, the artwork or artistic intention as its constitutive antagonistic outsides that I addressed in the previous chapter were central elements that I wanted to examine through working with Carter's project. I wanted to challenge the limits and potentials of collaborative engagement and participation within the institutional logic of representation and display. It was with this in mind that I invited Carter on a three-month residency[79] in Copenhagen and Roskilde in spring 2015.

Turning to the situational aspects of sonic art practice involves a discussion that juxtaposes ideas of project and artwork, anticipation and finitude, participatory processes and representational practices. The main question to be explored is how curatorship and the art museum institution can handle and work with the intransitive, ephemeral and dispersed knowledge production that arises from project based work with sound and participation. In order to arrive at a curatorially workable concept for such artistic project based work I investigate ideas around listening as well as deconstructive frameworks for interpretation which both inform and permeate discourse on artistic work with sound. On the one hand, my discussion revolves around a critique of core elements within the audiovisual litany (Sterne 2003) that construct a sonic subjectivity as the critical counterpoint to visually or textually oriented signifying practices (see page 9). On the other hand, I engage in a performative understanding of artistic work with sound that implicitly critiques artwork-centred, textualist approaches that place too much emphasis on the intention of the artist and the statement of the artwork – and thus often neglect listening as a significant form of knowledge production. I argue that listening is always predisposed by culture and history, and that (sonic) artworks are always encountered within relational and contingent situations that form and inform the experience and interpretation of the artwork. Outlining the situational aspects of artistic work with sound thus involves a critique of established discourses on listening or the artwork within the literature on so-called sound art. My analyses imply an approach where I deconstruct the ecologies in which the sonic artwork and listening intersect with the social and institutional concerns of curatorship in the wider political landscape outlined in the previous chapter. In conclusion to the present chapter I propose that a situational

[79] The residency was funded by the now terminated DIVA residency grants from The Danish Arts Council.

perspective alongside a notion of composition enables an analytical description and delimitation of the field without reducing either artwork, experience or interpretation to the normative art historical categories or philosophical entrenchments that has marked recent discussions on sound art.

In connecting the intransitive open-endedness of the project to the socio-political reality of the contemporary art museum, the trope of participation can be seen as a common denominator that cuts through discourses on both sound, listening and the museum. In *Background Noise* (LaBelle 2006), Brandon LaBelle argues that sound and listening are quite closely knit with participatory art and related discourse through the shared features of relationality, temporality and event. In the book, the topics of collaboration and participation are not explicitly pursued by LaBelle except from a small passage dealing with the notion of relational aesthetics, a term coined by curator and critic Nicholas Bourriaud (LaBelle 2006, 248-249, Bourriaud 2002). However, in this short section of the book the connection is evident by way of LaBelle's critique of Bourriaud for not incorporating sonic art practice and media art in his characterisation of relational aesthetics. To LaBelle, the

> […] incorporation of time by contemporary artists to fashion relational work […] finds bold manifestation in much sound work over the last thirty years. (LaBelle 2006, 249)

In LaBelle's view it is precisely the temporality of sound and its durational core characteristic that highlights the relational and social elements of listening as also being intrinsically participatory. He states that sound, by "staging real-time actions incorporate and produce forms of participation" (LaBelle 2006, 248).

In order to describe the juxtaposition between transitive and intransitive or work-centred and project-based approaches, it is worth turning to art historian Grant Kester's descriptions of recent developments in collaborative art. According to Kester collaborative practices challenge "the traditional perception of the work of art as an event or object authored beforehand and subsequently presented to an audience" (Kester 2011, 3). Kester identifies three areas where this shift has been significant. First, "contemporary collaborative art practices complicate conventional notions of aesthetic autonomy" (Kester 2011, 9-10). This is obviously related to the status of the artist as a cultural worker but also to the nature of the work's embedment and complicity within complex social and political concerns. For Kester, traditional conceptions of the artwork and of

autonomy are difficult to uphold once it has become clear that the boundaries between art production "and other, adjacent, forms of cultural production and activism" (Kester 2011, 10) are permeable. Second, Kester identifies a set of epistemological concerns that question the forms of knowledge that "collaborative, participatory, and socially engaged practices generate" (Kester 2011, 10). This is especially important from the museum perspective as it is often these forms of ephemeral knowledge, more than any object or other material remains from these actions, that are central to such artistic work. I shall return to this discussion in chapters 5 and 6. Finally, and related to this ephemeral intransitivity, Kester identifies important hermeneutic implications of collaborative practice because even though "many projects […] include a physical component, the artists involved also identify various dialogical *processes* as integral to the content of the work" (Kester 2011, 10). In sum, this leads Kester to suggest a

> […] model of reception, and a set of research methodologies, that are potentially quite different from those employed to analyze object-based art practices. The extemporaneous and participatory nature of these projects requires the historian or critic to employ techniques (field research, participant-observation, interviews, etc.) more typically associated with the social sciences. (Kester 2011, 10)

This means that the category of the exhibit and collectible, such as it is typically conceptualised within art museum discourse, is questioned and challenged by contemporary perspectives of collaboration, participation and project-based work. My analyses in this chapter shows a need to refigure museum practices in order to accommodate and make space for such work within the institutional routines and representational self-understandings of the art museum.

Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field

Although the counter-image of the traditionalist artwork implied by Kester may seem somewhat stereotypically constructed, his delineation of collaborative practice is valuable for my purposes and analyses of the *WGSEF*. The fluid borders and blurred temporal delimitation of the artwork as well as the focus on dialogical processes and knowledge *production* (as opposed to dissemination) were significant elements within the distributed and dispersed nature of the *WGSEF*. Due to its temporal and spatial dispersion and the concomitant contingency of its social distribution it is difficult to delimit and describe a project like the *WGSEF* in terms of an artwork. Particularly if artworks are understood primarily as an autonomous object that can be presented to an audience or accessioned for an archive. As already stated, the project is open-ended:

> The Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field is an ongoing, discursive project consisting of a series of workshops, lecture presentations, listening sessions, and screenings. The Working Group seeks to introduce new concepts regarding the role of sound in various professional specializations, and explore connections between a wide range of modern and contemporary sound based creative practices.[80]

As an ongoing discursive project with all the social, interpersonal and disciplinary distribution this entails it seems difficult to adopt the *WGSEF* to the daily reality, routines and working conditions of a museum institution within the representational regime. That is, to its exhibitionary practice as well as its routines of acquisition, archiving and preservation. The format of a distributed art project such as this questions the practices of representation enacted at the museum and vice versa. From the perspective of the museum as a cultural agent and heritage institution questions arise regarding how we might represent a contingent, situational and dispersed project such as this in a meaningful way through exhibitions and collections. From the perspective of the project, such practices of representation as enacted by the museum constitute an environment where it is difficult to maintain that project work is often inconclusive and leaves no tangible or predefined outputs. This is another dimension of the dynamic juxtaposition between democratisation of culture and cultural democracy within the expedient regime of culture discussed in the previous chapter. The exhibition space and the museum collection demands that there is *something* to be shown to somebody as a *material record* of an activity – an exhibit in need of dissemination, to put it in the juridical parlance. However, a project is functionally opposed to an exhibit. A project is something that is unfinished because it is projected – thrown forth – into the future. As such it never attains a fully developed identity. As Bruno Latour has argued, the identity of a project can be understood as a "variable ontology world" (Latour 1996, 175) meaning that it is always subject to negotiation between different, dispersed and partially incongruent interpretations that only get resolved once the project has turned into a finite object or an archive. As such, a project can only be addressed and evaluated comprehensively once

[80] http://kabircarter.com/workinggroup.html (accessed 6 April 2017).

it is completed because its progression is constantly balancing between dream and reality (Latour 1996, 23-25, 28-29) or between projected ideas and realised object.[81]

During my period of collaboration with Carter the diversity of approaches to sound within the project were pursued by working in a variety of different physical settings. Among other things we held a workshop in the reverberation chambers at the Acoustic Technology Section of the Technical University of Denmark, and did a nightly field trip in the woods north of Copenhagen conducted by bat expert Hans Baagøe focusing on the sounds of bats and echolocation.[82] These were supplemented by workshops conducted by Carter at The Royal Academy of Fine Arts, The University of Copenhagen, and the experimental music venue Mayhem in Copenhagen. The workshops focused with various emphases on bodily interaction with sound in space or on the material transductions of sound through different hard and soft materials. Furthermore, these activities were supplemented by a lecture given by Carter on the connections between the New York underground dance club scene and sound in the arts in the 1970s. Listening sessions and screenings that focused mainly on the artistic work of Maryanne Amacher and Max Neuhaus (both artists whose work and methods were important to "the form and purpose of the Working Group"[83]) also formed an important part of the activities. Most events were scheduled and announced to a wide group of possible participants whereas other encounters unfolded as more spontaneous and direct one-to-one activities and meetings between artist and participants, artist and curator, curator and participants, or amongst the participants themselves.

As the poster for the launch event stated, the project focused on the bodily and spatial aspects of sound:

> The Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field brings sounds into people and people into the lives of acoustic spaces. Participants will exercise and expand their abilities to hear beyond their ears and

[81] I am aware that descriptions such as my own partly transforms the project to a more object-like state. The crucial element is that no such transformation can lay claim to any form of universality as there will always be different and competing descriptions and other situated perspectives.

[82] We were also planning a workshop focusing on underwater sound where we had engaged with a leading biology expert on harbour porpoises but unfortunately this was not realised due to a breakdown of communication.

[83] Facebook announcement, 25 February 2015. See https://www.facebook.com/Working-Group-for-Sound-in-the-Expanded-Field-304230982932412/?fref=ts (accessed 21 October 2016).

> into other parts of their bodies, within unpredictable clusters of body parts, through architectural structures, and via air pockets and aquatic spaces, alleviating listening from the burden of predefined meanings of hearing sounds. (Poster for the launch event lecture presentation on April 21, 2015)

The bodily and sensate level where participants were offered the opportunity to explore sound in very close relation the to the specific site of encounter was a central element of the project especially engaged with throughout the workshops. In the workshop module "Room Shapings/Body Hearings (Hard and Soft Vibrations)" that was held both at the Arts Academy and at UCHP, the architectural specificity as well as materials found on-site were used to generate listening situations that were site-specific and unique to each workshop.[84] At the same time the physical presence, participation and interpersonal relations and actions carried out among the attendees, Carter and myself were important. They were necessary prerequisites for any form of what Miwon Kwon has termed "the work's completion" (Kwon 1997, 86), insofar as the workshop situation can be construed as an artwork or part of an artwork. The workshops thus constructed listening as the participation in the materially and socially site-specific event of knowledge production at a sensate level through the exploration of the relationality of bodies and sound in space.

[84] This interest in activating an architectural space through sound also became an important point of exploration and discussion during other sessions. For instance with regards to the work of Maryanne Amacher that was presented at two sessions at Mayhem. The material presented were a documentary on Amacher (See http://ima.or.at/imafiction/video-portrait-06-maryanne-amacher/, accessed 12 April 2017)), excerpts from a presentation she gave at Ars Electronica in 1989 (See https://vimeo.com/30955464, accessed 12 April 2017)), and the Sound Characters Vol. 1 and 2 (Tzadik: TZ 7043 and TZ 8055) albums on which otoacoustic emissions play an important role. In his presentation of these albums, Carter stressed that the listening situation created by the standard live music PA stereo setup at Mayhem would probably not present Amacher's work in a manner faithful to her own standards and to her habit of finely attuning the listening experience by her own careful listening to the site in order to determine exactly where the speakers would be placed prior to any performance or installation. To accommodate for this, participants were encouraged to move around the venue during listening in order to explore the potential of the sonic material as it engaged with the architecture of the site. It was remarkable how the otoacoustic emissions made by the inner ear would change, be emphasised, or wholly disappear as a result of the listener's subtlest movement in space and in relation to sound sources. Conducting the listening session by instructing listeners to move was an engagement with the acoustic specifics of the site, with the large PA system, and the raw concrete room – as well as a way for the site to intervene into the project itself by the specific conditions it set up for this work to be presented.

Room Shapings / Body Hearings

For the "Room Shapings/Body Hearings (Hard and Soft Vibrations)" workshop held on April 25, 2015 at the Arts Academy, Carter provided a simple set of materials consisting of two laptops with sine tone generator software routed through two stereo speaker setups with active Genelec 8030 monitors. One pair of monitors were fixed on the wall as part of the lecture room equipment and another pair was mounted on stands and thus moveable. The sounds projected were sine tones up to 440 Hz, which was the default tone of the software we used, but most sounds lay in a deep spectrum under 100 Hz – in clusters of two to five simultaneous tones per stereo setup. When at a sufficient amplitude the sine tone clusters would cause beating frequencies and other resonant phenomena to occur and the participants were encouraged to experience with their bodies how the spatial and architectural specifics of the room was co-productive in shaping and altering the listening experience. The participants chose the tones and combination of tones themselves and were able to continually alter the frequencies and move the speakers and other objects used to deflect or absorb sounds. In these workshops the combination of tones were often left unaltered for long periods allowing ample time for exploring specific resonant phenomena of the room and bodies within space. The workshops created an immersive listening situation where interaction between participants, artist and myself was mostly a matter of bodily, nonverbal gestures and miming of each other's actions as a way of sharing an experience. Conversation was more or less limited to questions and instructions regarding the technical setup and it was left to the individual participant to explore the interaction of sound, body, architecture, movement and sociality. The site-specific element was furthermore emphasised by the way that found materials were used to alter the listening: Tables were used as sound deflectors, a ladder as a way to reposition the listening body in space, a wastepaper basket to create a resonant chamber etc. The sound of the room was explored through listening at edges of the blackboards, window frames, or behind hanging fixtures such as a lecture room whiteboard – or as one participant was exploring after having taken off her boots, as vibratory energy absorbed by her feet through the wooden floorboards.[85] The various actions made by any one participant (including artist and curator) were often mimed by

[85] At the "Room Shapings/Body Hearings" workshop held at UCHP, architectural space was further explored through an attempt to calculate the size of the room and adjust the frequencies played in order to try to create standing waves within the room.

other participants as possible points of departure for further personal exploration of the sonico-social situation.

The influence of architectural space on the relation between sound and the listening body was emphasised by Carter's own movements in space. His movements encouraged the workshop participants to move through and within space in order to discover how any room has its own way of responding to a certain set of frequencies and wave patterns. This also showed how the listening situation can be choreographed and altered significantly by the slightest shift of listening position, sound source position or sound deflecting materials. In this way the workshop situation provided a very specific set of phenomenological conditions for listening where the relations and the bodily interaction between listener(s), sound material, and physical space became central points of exploration. The situation can be described by Miwon Kwon's idea of phenomenological site-specificity that she analysed in the wake of minimalism in the article "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity" from 1997:

> The art object or event in this context was to be singularly experienced in the here-and-now through the bodily presence of each viewing subject, in a sensorial immediacy of spatial extension and temporal duration. (Kwon 1997, 86)

In Kwon's account the site-specific work or event established "an inextricable, indivisible relationship between the work and its site, and demanded the physical presence of the viewer for the work's completion" (Kwon 1997, 86). Importantly, Kwon's idea of site did not only describe physical space but involved a whole set of material, temporal, spatial, and social contexts folded into any concrete physical site that I will return to in detail below. Transferred to the site of the workshop, the situated and complex weave of elements described above rendered it unique. Altering any component[86] however arbitrary it might seem, would have altered the whole situation rather dramatically at a phenomenological level. The workshop situation did not offer the material and temporal boundaries and delimitations associated with the artwork-as-object where it is possible to clearly define what is artwork and what is context. Rather artwork and con-

[86] A list of such components includes but is not limited to the sounds or frequencies, the technical setup, the specific place, the props, the composition of the group and the predispositions and idiosyncrasies of its participants, the duration or point in time, personal moods or immanently preceding events, distribution of power and interpersonal relationships among the group etc.

text were folded into one another in ways characterised both by contingency, emergence, immersion and co-production, which taken together disable textual or hermeneutical understandings of the artwork in question.

Sonic Sensibility

All things considered, the above description is quite similar to the auditory dimension within the audiovisual litany where a listening subject's relation to a sounding environment is characterised by ephemerality, inconclusiveness and embeddedness of experience. Importantly in this context, Salomé Voegelin has theorised listening as "a generative and participatory practice" (Voegelin 2014a, 3) that involves an

> […] ethical participation in the production not only of the piece but also of identity, as a sonic subjectivity that is born in the collectivity of listening. (Voegelin 2014a, 81)

In Voegelin's reasoning, the artwork is best described in terms of "an environment, a place made of its space and of my engagement, where our processes meet and reciprocate each other" (Voegelin 2014a, 82). The observation that the sound artwork can be described as a collective and processual environment in which the listener actively participates in the generation of meaning is well-suited to describe this workshop situation. To Voegelin however, the phenomenology of listening as a participatory and generative practice rests on a reduction, an epoché, where listening

> […] does not begin from a certain context and a priori knowledge about the work or the world, but suspends as much as possible ideas of genre, context, theory and purpose, to instead listen to the place sound builds in passing. (Voegelin 2014a, 3)

This phenomenological epoché implies an extreme aesthetics of presence where only the relation between propagating sound and subject is made significant. However, according to Voegelin the suspension is not meant as a renunciation of the world outside the work, but rather a sonico-political engagement with and generation of "the work as the world of our auditory imagination that expands into the world" (Voegelin 2014a, 49). It rests on the assumption that listening – as opposed to other forms of engagement (such as viewing and reading) – may help to offer "another point of view, an alternative perspective on how things are, producing new ideas on how they could be and how we could live" (Voegelin 2014a, 2-3). In other words, Voegelin sees in listening the potential to reveal hidden and unseen layers of the world in order to foster a sharpened sonic

sensibility. This in turn will be able to question the "singular actuality" of the visual world and proceed

> […] to hear other possibilities that are probable too, but which, for reasons of ideology, power and coincidence do not take equal part in the production of knowledge, reality, value, and truth. (Voegelin 2014a, 3)

Connected more directly to the institutionalised space of the museum gallery, Voegelin has argued that the practice of soundwalking in such an environment may generate a "sonic sensibility [which] is not antivisual but revives the multidimensionality, temporality, and complexity of the visual" (Voegelin 2014b, 127). In her argument this sonic sensibility enables other interpretations of the museum space than art history's traditional visual approach that she understands as centred on the artwork and the figure of the artist. Voegelin's idea of a sonic sensibility is akin to Irit Rogoff's concept of "looking away" (Rogoff 2005) as a minor strategy to subvert the major narratives embedded within western culture (including art historical canons) and replace them with a genuine form of participation that also acknowledges the individual's perspective, position and situatedness. However, Rogoff does not advocate for a phenomenological reduction in order to enable this strategy of looking away. Rather it is enabled by an acknowledgement that poststructural critical thought is insufficient as an analytic tool to pry open contexts in which we are ourselves deeply embedded. Thus, cultural critique forms the immediate background and precondition for her argument even if her ambition is to surpass it by a more embedded concept of criticality (see also Rogoff 2004).

Returning to Miwon Kwon, the reduction necessary on order to generate Voegelin's sonic sensibility also becomes problematic on an empirical level when looking at the broader picture of the *WGSEF*. Kwon identifies three interrelated paradigms of site-specificity; "phenomenological, social/institutional, and discursive" (Kwon 1997, 95). Tracing a backward movement in the site-specific work of her own time, she defines a discursive site-specificity much akin to the general thrust of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics in terms of knowledge production and its verification:

> But more than these dual [phenomenological and institutional] expansions of art into culture, which obviously diversify the site, the distinguishing characteristic of today's site-oriented art is the way in which both the art work's relationship to the actuality of a location (as site) *and* the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are *subordinate* to a *discursively* determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate. Fur-

> thermore, unlike previous models, the site is not defined as a *pre*condition. Rather, it is *generated* by the work (often as "content"), and then *verified* by its convergence with an existing discursive formation. (Kwon 1997, 92)

While I have so far focused primarily on the phenomenological site in the description of the singular workshop situation it is important to mention that the social/institutional and discursive site specificity is equally important aspects of the *WGSEF* when addressed on the level of the greater project. The connection between Kwon's essay and the *WGSEF* was mentioned several times in my conversations with Carter and was underscored by the use of the term "discursive project" in the descriptions and promotional materials we distributed. Through Kwon's three modalities of site specificity, the description of the workshop as an element *within* the larger frame of the project makes clear that the discursive framing or generation of site as well as the institutional site specificity were important and palpable elements within the *WGSEF*. Elements that became evident by working in a variety of different settings with different affordances and obstacles as well as by the art historical and theoretical references imbricated within the project. In the totality of the project the phenomenological, institutional and discursive sites do not operate at different levels, geographical locations or in different parts of the project. Rather they seem to blend and interact on a more pervasive level as different registers throughout the disparate elements that construct the project. As Kwon notes after having traced the historicity of the concept, the three forms of site-specificity are not to be seen as a linear historical trajectory after all but rather as paradigmatic

> […] competing definitions, overlapping with one another and operating simultaneously in various cultural practices today (or even within a single artist's single project). (Kwon 1997, 95)

Listening in the Expanded Field

While Voegelin's phenomenology of listening may be well-suited to describe embodied and concrete encounters with sounds in specific spaces, such as the workshop situation, it is not sufficient to describe the *WGSEF* on the level of the overall project, nor the iteration I was part of. Such description involves a complex weave of discursive components as well as components that, as I have already mentioned, are not immediately available to every perception or experience at any given point of engagement. Voegelin's idea of the suspension of context and theory also becomes problematic in a more general sense when addressing all the non-audible aspects of artistic work with sound.

In the case of the *WGSEF* the discursive register is (besides being used by Carter to describe the project) emphasised quite directly through the project title's reference to Rosalind Krauss' notion of the expanded field described in her essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" (Krauss 1979) from 1979. In this essay Krauss maps the artistic development in American sculptural practice from the mid-1960s up until the late 1970s. She finds that modernist sculpture has been emptied out by minimalist installation and developments toward land art practices that call for a different sense of historicity and sensitivity. To Krauss it

> […] is obvious that the logic of the space of postmodernist practice is no longer organized around the definition of a given medium on the grounds of material, or, for that matter, the perception of material. It is organized instead through the universe of terms that are felt to be in opposition within a cultural situation. (Krauss 1979, 43)

It is clear that the emergence of the 1970s' conceptual art is the immediate background for her experience and description. By expanding the field of sculpture to encompass a "universe of terms" within "a cultural situation" it should be evident that conceptualism is in fact what has caused the expansion of the field, and that this expansion is highly discursive in the broadest possible sense. Tellingly, she does not speak about materials proper to an expanded field of sculpture. Rather it is defined "in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium […] might be used" (Krauss 1979, 42).[87] Kabir Carter's deliberate reference of this essay in the title of his project clearly situates the *WGSEF* (as well as his view of sound in general) as elements in this process, where "new materials and genres were converging and splitting in a variety of ways" (Kabir Carter, email correspondence, December 26 2016), and where the complexity of the cultural situation becomes an integral part of the work. In the case of the *WGSEF*, listening in the concrete workshop situation is thus only one component in the knowledge production that is weaved into other forms of knowing by the title and descriptions of the project. As well as by the already mentioned artistic references established by Carter and the diversity of activities within the project as a whole. To try to

[87] In connection to a recent retrospective of Ed Ruscha at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, Lars Bent Petersen argued that the modernist and formalist notion of artistic material that Krauss' essay tries to subvert has been extremely tenacious in art history and discourse even though it has been under radical transformation within the arts since the start of the 1960s (Petersen 2018). In the light of my arguments made in the introduction (see page 7) about the preoccupation of sound art theory with the medium specific properties of sound, the rereading of Krauss seems once again to be actualised.

suspend these references and contexts in the concrete listening situations as suggested by Voegelin would be a diminishing of Carter's project. Furthermore, the weave is complicated by the different idiosyncrasies brought into the concrete situations by participants as well as the negotiations with the different institutional structures that the project engaged with. The aesthetics of presence pursued in the workshop situations are thus conditioned and balanced by equally important elements of absence (or reference) embedded within the totality of the project. And within art history as well as the wider cultural and societal context that the project inevitably forms part of. The totality of the project is always partly invisible (and inaudible) because of its on-going character, meaning that presence is always folded into absence and vice versa. Each singular event in the project where presence may be pursued connects to each absent event.

My alignment of the workshop situation with Voegelin's aesthetics of presence may suggest that the workshops were focused quite narrowly on the bodily, sensate experience of listening as a form of immersion within the concrete, physical acoustics of an architecture. A form of listening that suggests a phenomenology in which the immersive bodily perception of resonant phenomena is at the centre, and where focus is directed towards the non-verbal, bodily sensations of experience as a critical activity in its own right. Conversely, this phenomenology also suggests that a critical engagement with the institutional and discursive contexts of both sites and sounds would have less immediate currency. Understood as such the immersive listening within the workshop comes close to the uncritical and essentialist "phenomenological cul-de-sac" (Kim-Cohen 2009, xix) that Seth Kim-Cohen has ascribed to sound art reception and theory in general and to contemporary sound art exhibitions in particular. As a flow "away from conceptual concerns and back to mute perception" (Kim-Cohen 2016, 4). Will Schrimshaw has similarly noted that such focus on immersion in contemporary art and sound art seems to be a "new orthodoxy" where "the immersive is routinely championed as an experiential quality whose value is inherent yet strengthened through opposition to the visual" (Schrimshaw 2015, 155).

Schrimshaw's and Kim-Cohen's positions stand out as antithetical to Voegelin's. In the following I will address the workshop listening situation in light of Kim-Cohen's focus on the discursive elements of sound art, and as an opposite structuring element to the phenomenology of Voegelin. Tellingly, Kim-Cohen pursues a "non-cochlear sonic art"

as the subtitle to his first book indicates. Here sound art is understood primarily in continuation of the 1960s and 1970s conceptual art practice. By the term non-cochlear he means to suggest that the non-audible, conceptual elements are as equally constitutive for sound art as sound itself. He does not deny the significance of perceptual phenomena as such but stresses that we cannot "know if there are experiences that exist prior to or outside of signification" (Kim-Cohen 2016, 55). Such experiences are probable – but ultimately they rely on language to be conveyed. Thus,

> […] we cannot even think them, because thinking is a transposition that relies on signification: a this-for-that transaction that would encumber "pure" experience with all the burdens of signification. (Kim-Cohen 2016, 56)

Following Kim-Cohen who in part builds his argument on a reading of Rosalind Krauss, the understanding of the workshop situation as an act of mute and uncritical perception may even partly be supported by the choice of sine tones as a means to activate the listening situation. As he has argued, the use of sine waves has become a trope within the sonic arts, which tends to signify a desire for purity as well as a wish to avoid "the annoying complications of other kinds of signals" (Kim-Cohen 2016, 55). In this view sine tones become a sign that signifies a desire to silence the social and the site-specific contexts of listening.[88] However, in the "Room Shapings/Body Hearings" workshop the topic of exploration was not the acoustic or contextual properties of the sine tones themselves. These workshops focused on the participants' bodily interaction with and exploration of the physical space within the acoustic situation generated by sonically *activating* this space *with* sine tones. This partly supports the supposed purity and the freedom from "contextual and social problematics" (Kim-Cohen 2016, 53) of the sine wave, and renders the sine waves used in the workshop as more or less transparent media to activate the relation between listener and site.

On the other hand, we did not listen for any 'meaning' inherent to or signification emanating from the sine tones or combination of tones. The focus of the workshop was

[88] While it is true from an acoustic point of view that a sine wave is perhaps one of the most basic, simple and 'pure' sound units available, it is certainly not free of social and historical connotations and valuations. And furthermore, once it is released into a physical space the sine wave reverberates within and engages with this space, which in turn alters the experienced acoustic properties of the sine tone drastically. Once they are released in the air sine waves are as malleable as they are basic. Kim-Cohen seems to understand this in his critique, which is directed toward the instances in sound art where these connotations (and physics) are left unquestioned in favour of an uncritical fascination with the immersive potential that sound offers.

explorative rather than interpretive and the situation was not a hermeneutical encounter with an artwork from which we would extract meaning – rather it was a generative, social and spatial situation where the sine tones were used as sonic tools. However, this alone does not free the use of sine waves from connotation and they do plunge "back into the miasma of history and the social" (Kim-Cohen 2016, 55). Throughout my collaboration with Carter this intersection between the sonic materiality of the sine waves used in the workshops and their conceptuality and historicity was not interrogated explicitly either by Carter, myself or any of the participants.[89] By using the sine waves as tools or a sort of non-signifying sonic matter, the workshops did promote a conception of listening as the experience and examination of bodily immersion in a purely vibrational materiality of sound in space. Thus, the phenomenological investigation of sites in the workshop did in a sense fail to examine and question its own method and sound material. If the single workshop is isolated from the rest of the project it can indeed be argued that the situation maintained and helped promote an idea of listening that is not critical of its own historical and social context. But only if not contextualised and seen in isolation from the greater project. As I argued above in connection to Irit Rogoff's strategy of looking away, embedment and criticality need not be mutually exclusive and this goes for listening too. On the contrary, I believe that immersive listening is informed and shaped by history and culture and part of its critical potential is to acknowledge and analyse this. And vice versa a critical listening need not shed its cultural and historical baggage but should instead use it as its background and context. Immersive listening and critical contextualisation both demand an effort, and they both yield knowledge. However different in nature such effort and knowledge may be construed. Even though immersive listening was foregrounded and prioritised in the workshop situation it does not automatically follow that this listening could or should not be historicised and contextualised. In order to do so I need to digress from the empirical context of the *WGSEF* and engage more in depth with Seth Kim-Cohen's critique of the sine wave as an instance of the concept of "sound-in-itself" (Kim-Cohen 2009, 121ff). This digression paves the way for a discussion of the notions of situation and composition as models for conceptualising the project as well as a more general notion

[89] Unfortunately I was not familiar with Seth Kim-Cohen's prolific analysis of the sine wave at the time we conducted the workshops although it was published three years in advance of the paper version cited here (Kim-Cohen 2016) as an e-book on Bloomsbury in 2013. This came to my attention shortly after the period of collaboration with Carter.

of artistic work with sound within a curatorial framework where the context of the artwork in question is profoundly integral to the experience and significance of it.

Digression: Sound in itself

For Seth Kim-Cohen the dominance of the trope of sound-in-itself and the concomitant uncritical attitudes towards listening is rooted in theories of music that rest mainly on the reception of two founding historic positions within the 20th century's sonic arts. Namely those of Pierre Schaeffer and John Cage. In the case of Pierre Schaeffer, Kim-Cohen's critique is directed towards the idea of reduced listening and the Husserlian phenomenological epoché that it rests upon that he sees as a radical way of decontextualizing sound. According to Kim-Cohen the reduction renders sound more or less autonomous in a state where it is severed from the social and where

> […] the sound signifier signifies only itself; it does not point to some other signified that is meant to be brought forth by the signifying relation. (Kim-Cohen 2009, 12)

Reduced listening, the acousmatic epoché, and ultimately also the musique concrète of Pierre Schaeffer is made "responsible for bracketing all information that might shade our auditory experience with signification, with historical contingency, with social import" (Kim-Cohen 2009, 13).[90] Effectively a sort of super-autonomous music. Kim-Cohen's argument is implicitly probably as direct an opposition as one can imagine to the position of Salomé Voegelin. His main point of critique against the Husserlian phenomenology that he sees as pervading sound art and sound art theory, is its focus on the now or, perhaps more precisely, on the temporal aspect of listening expressed through the transient simultaneity of both sound and sonic experience. He invokes Derrida's deconstruction of the *Augenblick* – as the impossibility of the existence of a moment "devoid of retention (memory) and protention (expectation)" (Kim-Cohen 2009, 127). Mapping this onto listening he adds that it is not only philosophically but also anatomically (as the ear cannot blink) impossible to think about sound outside of its social and historical context. A context which is always part of listening as "memory and expectation" even if it is not part of the "actually audible" (Kim-Cohen 2009, 140). Hence any rejection of signification like the one he sees in Schaeffer's Husserlian (and by

[90] For a comprehensive discussion of Pierre Schaeffer's theories on the sound object and the acousmatic reduction including their connection to Husserlian phenomenology, see Brian Kane's *Sound Unseen.* (Kane 2014, 15-41).

implication in Voegelin's) phenomenology doubles back on itself precisely as a signifying practice. This is also the case concerning the use of sine tones in the *WGSEF* workshops. Even if they were not contextualised, the sheer lack of contextualisation does in itself signify certain ideas of the relation between sonic material and listening subject. The lack of contextualisation can certainly be interpreted as a desire to highlight the role of the listener's body and the production of non-verbal knowledges or sonic sensibilities via immersion. These knowledges and sensibilities are then cast as significant in and of themselves and as counterpoints to dominant visual discourse within art history and criticism much in vein with Voegelin's thought.

Perhaps even moreso than Schaeffer – and at any rate closer to Seth Kim-Cohen's own conceptualist leaning – he refers to John Cage as the other significant historical antecedent to the prevailing ideas of sound-in-itself. For Kim-Cohen the conventional reception of Cage has contributed to the trope of sound-in-itself through emphasising the idea of non-intentionality at the level of sound in works like *Silent Prayer* and *4'33"* – as well as in the often-told anecdote of the anechoic chamber where Cage instead of the expected silence experienced the sounds of his own body (Cage 2004, 13) and thus became able to listen to all sound as if it were music. In Kim-Cohen's reading, Cage's achievement was to recast "attention to the activity of listening quite apart from the activity of composing" (Kim-Cohen 2009, 21). This interpretation of Cage rests on his famous dictum that one may

> […] give up the desire to control sound, clear his mind of music, and set about discovering means to let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments. (Cage 2004, 10)

Kim-Cohen argues that this element of Cagean thought has been taken too literally in its reception as a way of "downplaying compositional intentionality and […] privileging the listener's role" (Kim-Cohen 2009, 21, see also Kim-Cohen 2009, 159ff) in relation to Cage's own oeuvre. This reception is of course variously fuelled and emphasised by Cage himself, for instance by statements like:

> New music: new listening. Not an attempt to understand something that is being said, for, if something were being said, the sounds would be given the shapes of words. Just an attention to the activity of sounds. (Cage 2004, 10)

All environmental (and non-intended) sound is here distinctly cast as potential music whereas words and language are relegated to a domain of signification that conversely

is distinctly *outside* of music. In his critique of this position Kim-Cohen relies on Douglas Kahn, who has repeatedly remarked (Kahn 1993, 1999) that Cage in fact silences the sociality of sounds by taking this standpoint. By pulling everyday sound into the musical domain and claiming that all sound can be listened to for its musical qualities, Kahn argues that Cage eventually stripped such everyday sound of its social significance by a radical move of aestheticization. In Kahn's reading of Cage it is central

> […] that while venturing to the sounds outside music, [Cage's] ideas did not adequately make the trip; the world he wanted for music was a select one, where most of the social and ecological noise was muted and where other more proximal noises were suppressed. (Kahn 1997, 566)

To rectify this reception of Cage where sound-in-itself is promoted to a position outside or above the significance and meaning *of* sound, Seth Kim-Cohen opts for a classic avant-gardist negation-as-institutional-critique[91] in his conceptual reading of *4'33"*.

> […] all the music is erased; the musicians, their instruments, their expert music-making capabilities, the conventions of the concert hall, the traditions of Western music production and reception – these have all been deleted from the picture. (Kim-Cohen 2009, 167)

To Kim-Cohen this calls for a situation where the absence or negativity is that which constructs the artwork proper.[92] In such a reading of Cage, the tangible, concrete sound of any given performance of *4'33"* has now become wholly insignificant to the composition because this composition is about something entirely different. Namely, institutional critique. The sounds of any given performance are cast as merely incidental and non-significant to the artwork or the conceptual statement that the artwork makes. I would contend that that is another way of taking Cage's non-intention too literally because it displaces meaning from sound to institutional critique and conceptualism. Furthermore this interpretation needs to assert a very narrow concept of musical composition as the unfolding of composerly intended sounding events-in-time in order to generate its non-cochlear and supposedly more critical counterpart as so-called sound art. Looking for instance at Cage's *Variations* pieces from the 1960s shows a method

[91] By this term I wish to draw the reader's attention to Peter Bürger's influential *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Bürger 1974).

[92] Although with the completely reversed intention this argument is surprisingly close to Carl Dahlhaus' classical interpretation of John Cage as that very precise and extreme negation by which we become able to recognise the musical work of art. To Dahlhaus it is precisely Cage's anti-art negation of any and all musical dogmatism that makes visible the musical artwork proper as its opposite (Dahlhaus 1982, 86-93).

of composition where composing understood as the structuring of a succession of sounds is left in favour a method that focuses on organising or setting up the rules that might structure (possibly sonic) events.

In his discussion of Cagean and post-Cagean composition in the book *After Sound* (Barrett 2016), G Douglas Barrett shows the narrow scope of Kim-Cohen's conception of music and composition by more or less reversing Kim-Cohen's own argument. Music in itself according to Barrett, is not necessarily cochlear in the first place. Instead of being primarily identified by the presence or absence of sound he argues that critical music should be discussed on the terms of a broadly defined concept of composition. In this sense Barrett takes the Cagean concept of composition to be fully intentional as the generation of the conditions of possibility for a (more or less) specific situation to occur that may or may not include sounding elements. Although their motivations are more or less aligned in the critique of the phenomenological reduction and sound-in-itself, Barrett's book can be read as an attempt to reverse the "musicophobia" of Kim-Cohen (see Kane 2013) and reclaim for music the critical terrain that Kim-Cohen reserves only for his non-cochlear conception of sound art. What is gained is that composition is freed from only being related to the organisation and succession of sounds, and thus music plunges back into the social and cultural with full force in ways that Kim-Cohen's narrower concept of music cannot account for. As such, Seth Kim-Cohen's idea of music as sound art's other is no less essentialist than Voegelin's idea of promoting listening devoid of any context as the only proper mode of engagement with sound art.[93] On the contrary, it favours a certain type of reading at the expense of other, more inclusive engagements with the artwork. A reading that can only progress from the conceptual in order to get to the audible. It merely replaces one generalising dogmatism with another in its attempt to define and sanction what constitutes sound art, the gallery (or fine) arts and music proper.

Seth Kim-Cohen's deconstructive argument thus poses a more or less direct counterpart to Voegelin's phenomenology. As such, this juxtaposition between an aesthetics of presence and an aesthetics of absence constitutes a fundamental discussion within much sound art theory. A juxtaposition which is also integral to a project like the *WGSEF*.

[93] Brian Kane discusses these issues in detail in an article aptly entitled "Musicophobia, or Sound Art and the Demands of Art Theory" (Kane 2013).

This opposition is often cast in terms of a conflict of mutual preclusion between listening as an immersive subjective practice vis-à-vis understanding as objectification, distancing and generation of meaning through signification - as presented in the figure of Jonathan Sterne's audiovisual litany (Sterne 2003). The distance between the thing and the sign – or the differences between the temporality of experience and the textuality of discourse – become central to this conflict.[94] It is not my intention here to solve this problem nor to choose sides in the argument. This would probably only contribute to establishing further entrenchment between sonic art practice and the visual arts or music, as well as between the different positions within and between sound art theory, musicology and art history. Such entrenchment has probably been an important economic and discursive element in defining and categorising a thing such as sound art as well as the academic sub-discipline of sound studies. However, both artistic and curatorial practices have now moved on towards more inclusiveness. The consequence of this is a more blurred field where medium specificity is increasingly becoming a lesser concern in favour of interdisciplinarity and freer movement between modalities and platforms. Rather than add to an aged entrenchment, I would rather address the questions of materiality and discursivity (as well as those concerning sound art and non-sound art) from such an inclusive perspective. Here the conflicts between immersive listening and discursive understanding may become productive in formulating curatorial strategies and questions concerning artistic work with sound.

As mentioned, in order to think about experience we rely on language and signification. And experience is always conditioned by both physiological as well as social and historical preconditions which form the listener's situation and horizon. In this sense, listening can never be alone and the sonic epoché can only ever be an ideal never to be fully accomplished. However, this is not the same thing as claiming that an affective,

[94] While the view that the workshop situation described above may favour an uncritical and immersive engagement with sound that is based on an ideological phenomenology is certainly valid, it may also be pointed out that the stark opposition between the phenomenal and the conceptual in Kim-Cohen's reading of Krauss is susceptible to other interpretations. As Brian Kane has pointed out (Kane 2013, 14-16), Kim-Cohen's emphasis on the discursive elements over a more developed phenomenology of perception can also be understood as a consequence of his reading of Rosalind Krauss. In criticising this element in Kim-Cohen's text, Kane refers to the missing reciprocity between bodily sense experience and discursive significance and states that "perception is precisely her [Krauss'] focus" (Kane 2013, 14-15). He further points out that Krauss' concern in establishing an expanded field for sculpture is that the artwork not only "opens up the possibility of endless substitutions of signification, but that it specifically allows for the viewer to become aware of their own productivity as a viewer" (Kane 2013, 16).

non-discursive mode of listening is not useful or generative just because it is always already saturated by signification. Rather, I would claim they work in tandem or parallel. We cannot, as Kim-Cohen suggests (Kim-Cohen 2009, 193), give up on listening just because it is conditioned by signification. On the contrary, this signification is in part generated reciprocally and embodied through specific acts of listening in concrete situations and contexts. In the workshop situation described above it is not evident that the phenomenological preoccupation with the site and the need for the "physical presence of the viewer for the work's completion" (Kwon 1997, 86) ends up in the exact same "phenomenological cul-de-sac" (Kim-Cohen 2009, xix) that Kim-Cohen ascribes to immersive listening. The only thing that can be concluded is that listening, like any other act of meaning-making always needs to be carefully constructed and contextualised – materially, bodily, phenomenologically as well as conceptually. In Chapter 6 I shall return in more detail to ideas of embodied situatedness in the discussion of sounding as a "material-semiotic figuration" (Goh 2017, 284).

Present Sound, Absent sound

In summation, Seth Kim-Cohen's attack on Husserlian phenomenology and Cagean sound-in-itself implicitly critiques a position such as Voegelin's on the grounds of its focus on immersion, its suspension of all context, and its preoccupation with the non- or pre-discursive experience as a subjective and generative completion of the artwork. The positions are more or less irreconcilable. Voegelin places emphasis on the listener's intentionality whereas Kim-Cohen highlights the intention of the artist and the statement of the artwork. Voegelin starts by listening whereas Kim-Cohen may not listen at all. Where Voegelin dives directly into the sonic materiality of the work as the phenomenological production of meaning generated through bracketed listening, Kim-Cohen carefully constructs a non-cochlear framework that eschews the phenomenal "in favor of the expansiveness of the textual and the discursive" (Kim-Cohen 2009, 229). In his understanding the sonic artwork is wholly constructed by "terms in opposition" rather than by "essentialist listening" (Kim-Cohen 2009, 229).

In attempting to describe a project like the *WGSEF* it is productive to maintain this tension between presence and absence. Both positions may inform the understanding of the *WGSEF* in all its facets – an understanding which can also have implications for understanding artistic and curatorial work with sound in a wider sense. As Grant Kester has suggested in his investigation of collaborative practice, it is productive to engage

with the "normative conventions of art theory itself" (Kester 2011, 11) from a denaturalised perspective. A suggestion that seems highly relevant in the discussion of both Voegelin's and Kim-Cohen's positions. Kester uses

> […] the concept of an avant-garde "discourse," or "tradition" to describe a set of features common to a range of otherwise diverse contemporary practices. While the notion of an avant-garde tradition may seem oxymoronic, it is my contention that certain historically specific modes of artistic production have achieved a canonical status in contemporary theory and criticism. The constituent elements of this avant-garde tradition include a particular model of reception (based on shock or disruption), the a priori assumption of the viewer's perceptual or cognitive naïveté, and a belief in the intrinsically transgressive or liberatory power of desire or a-rational somatic experience. This mode of production remains quite vital and pervasive in contemporary art. My description of it as a "tradition" is not meant as a judgment of its efficacy or value, but is simply intended to denaturalize it as a particular system of art production rather than the necessary condition of all advanced art. (Kester 2011, 11)

Reading Voegelin's focus on the narrow and reduced relation between artwork and listener through this lens does in fact render her notion of criticality as an ideological construct. The radical suspension that enables her concept of critical listening is simultaneously a de-situation of the cultural and conceptual context that the listener and the artwork are always already parts of. Therefore, Voegelin's focus on immersive listening is to be understood in continuation of an avant-garde tradition of transgression through raw sense perception and a-rational somatic experience. By focusing narrowly on the somatic relation between listener and sound she downplays the significance of all adjacent elements, contexts, information and sensory inputs that constitute experience in a concrete listening situation. Elements and inputs that I would agree with Kim-Cohen, are always operational in any engagement with the world. Following Kester, the reduction necessary in order to turn listening into a critical and generative praxis would construct itself as an avant-garde normativity that in fact runs counter to Voegelin's ambition and becomes the exact opposite: the construction of listening as an activity that requires knowledge of its own contingent context and subversive potential. Listening is as learned, specialised and culturally conditioned as any other form of relation to the world. As an activity it is necessarily connected to a set of social and cultural codifications that are iterated in certain ways and within specific (art) historic paradigms/epistemes. As Brandon LaBelle states, we are sensing bodies "full of culture, […] pressed and shaped by those agents of language and lawfulness, and involved with others" (LaBelle 2015, 296-297). The Husserlian "sonic epoché" of Voegelin that aims to "get

to the wealth of the heard through bracketed listening" (Voegelin 2010, 35) addresses the complexity of any given cultural situation through a form of negation of that situation itself. A negation that aestheticizes listening as a free-floating and speculative activity that is only able to address the world by partially removing itself from it. It is in this way that Voegelin's avant-garde ethos for listening is formed by a focus on a-rational somatic experience in which the sonic epoché constitutes an instance of what Grant Kester would call "a particular model of reception (based on shock or disruption)" (Kester 2011, 11). Furthermore, the intersubjectivity presupposed by Voegelin's argument collides with the construction of listening as an inherently social and cultural activity. The participatory collectivity in Voegelin's understanding of listening rests on a transcendental subject that can only construct the intersubjective on an idealist phenomenological level and not in empirical cultural and social situations. The notion of participation inherent to Voegelin's concept of listening thus renders itself more or less as a speculative universalism, which is essentially individual instead of collective. Here, I side with LaBelle in claiming that the participatory elements inherent to listening are not ideal but both real as material, social *and* cultural constructions that can be negotiated performatively in concrete situations.

On the other hand, Seth Kim-Cohen's focus on signification and on the artwork-as-text is invested in a similar logic of disruption that does not seem to capture the temporal and generative development in concrete listening situations. Moreover, the focus on signification is also problematic when applied to collaborative, intransitive and inconclusive projects like the *WGSEF*, where the artwork in question infinitely defers delimitation and where authorly intention is dispersed or unclear. In continuation of Grant Kester's critique, the textual approach of Kim-Cohen would render itself as the promotion of a mode of reading that is "largely drawn from the canon of structuralist and post-structuralist literary theory" (Kester 2011, 55) that sought to "destabilize the viewer or reader through an essentially hermeneutic engagement" (Kester 2011, 54). We saw this exemplified in Kim-Cohen's reading of Cagean silence. The hermeneutic engagement Kester speaks of would presuppose a disruptive division between artwork and viewer/reader. This distance between the thing and the sign is, as we have seen, hard to maintain once we exchange viewer/reader with listener/participant and the autonomous artwork with the project. In this sense the absent is always related to and contemporaneous with the present and vice versa – almost in the manner of Bergson's famous

figure of the cone (Deleuze 1991, 60). It is in this nexus between the absent and the present that my analysis of the *WGSEF* may be of relevance in wider discussions of sound in the arts.

The interdependency of the different modalities of site-specificity within the project does point to the more general observation that institutional and discursive sites are always encountered in, and have bearing on, specific phenomenological situations. This means that all three sites, to varying degrees, are both present and absent at all times, and that presence and absence are reciprocal. The secluded profundity of listening that Voegelin's phenomenology endorses may be posed as an artistic and/or curatorial pursuit of a radical sonic epistemology that can provide important critiques of representational, visual and textual logics and knowledge/power formations. But it cannot stand alone as a philosophy of sound art. Conversely, a critique of immersed listening that reduces the potential meanings of artistic work with sound, to a non-cochlear phenomenon not to be listened to, is an equally radical move. In fact Seth Kim-Cohen decontextualizes the materiality, physicality and temporality of sonic experience as well as he disembodies any act of listening from the concrete cultural and corporeal situation it is always embedded in. Listening and thinking need not be adversaries. Rather, they go together. Listening is thus both an activity of learning and a learned activity. Just like the sonic situation is both phenomenological and discursive. Instead of casting the related dichotomies of presence and absence, sound and significance or materiality and discourse as incongruences that exclude one another, we need to see them as opposite ends that structure a continuum of complex meaning-making processes.

Situation and composition

Throughout this chapter I have held the term *sound art* at arm's length and instead tried to describe an assemblage of different nuances that, taken together, characterise and circumscribe the encounter with the *WGSEF*. I have increasingly applied the notion of the situation to describe what goes on between listener and sounding artwork. In conclusion to the above discussion, I would like to unfold that concept with reference to the work done by Sanne Krogh Groth and Kristine Samson on the notion of "sound art situations" (Groth and Samson 2017). This idea provides a bridge for the reciprocal relationality I have described and as such it can be made central to a curatorial engagement with sound in the arts. Etymologically the word *situation* is derived from the Latin

verb *situare*, which means to place or to locate. *Situare* is itself a verb form of *situs*, site. According to the OED, *situation* has a number of common usages:

> The position or location of something in relation to its surroundings; a specific place (in relation to its surroundings); the condition or state (of anything); a general state of affairs; the position of a person with regard to circumstances; a particular conjunction of circumstances.[95]

The surroundings, the dependence upon circumstance, the combinational and the contingent thus all define a situation. The Random House English Dictionary offers the explanation that a situation can be "the aggregate of biological, psychological and sociocultural factors acting on an individual or group to condition behavioural patterns."[96] In a listening situation we might also add to this latter definition all manners of material, spatial and temporal factors. By implication, situations are highly contingent assemblages of factors that are acting at specific locations and under specific circumstances.

The notion of the sound art situation described by Krogh Groth and Samson embraces this diversity and yet enables quite a precise conceptualisation of the reciprocity and performativity in sonic encounters. In developing the concept they depart from their curatorial experiences with the production of two concrete public space sound installation/performance situations. These situations, respectively by Jeremy Woodruff and Brandon LaBelle, both take the concrete site of Urbanplanen in Copenhagen as their specific subject and point of departure. However, both examples engage with the political and social realities of this site as well as with different notions of participation related both to Urbanplanen's inhabitants and the audiences to the performances. Krogh Groth and Samson triangulates the notion of the sound art situation by drawing on insights from sound (art) studies, performance studies and recent discussions within contemporary art and curating. Their aim is to surpass the discussion of what might constitute sound art and the sound art work proper in order to propose the notion of the situation as

> […] what occurs when the artwork, the site and the social are interrelated to such a degree that the difference between aesthetic experience and social engagement disappears. (Groth and Samson 2017, 105)

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[95] See http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/180520?redirectedFrom=situation& (Accessed 2 February 2018).

[96] See https://www.ordbogen.com/opslag.php?dict=rhee&word=situation (Accessed 2 February 2018).

The driving force behind their argument is rooted in the performance studies tradition of looking at how things (artworks, sites, audiences etc.) act rather than what works of art might mean in a hermeneutical sense. It seems that the ambition behind their proposal is to develop a more inclusive conception of sound art that is not necessarily tied to the medium specificity of sound and sound's acoustic properties but opens up to a variety of other factors that are acting – with sound as just one (albeit central) component. The authors delineate a framework where

> […] 'sound art situations' is a useful term for the theoretical analysis and interpretation of sound art pieces, where contexts are entangled into the piece to such an extent that they are inseparable from what might be reckoned as the artwork. (Groth and Samson 2017, 109)

At risk of trivialising the careful construction of their argument I would contend that from a curator's point of view, as well as in consequence of the above description of the *WGSEF* project, *any* temporal and site-specific artwork can be addressed productively through the notion of the situation. Furthermore, it can be argued that all artworks are in a sense temporal, though with different durational qualities. As conservator and art historian Hanna Hölling has recently proposed, all artworks should be understood in terms of an "aesthetics of change" and "the relative durations of the impermanent" (Hölling 2016) rather than through the opposition between ephemeral and stable artworks. Additionally, from collapsing Miwon Kwon's three notions of site specificity into one expanded notion that simultaneously engages with phenomenological (physical), institutional (historical) and discursive (social) sites at various levels, we can see that every artwork is situated in its encounter with its surroundings.

This expanded-and-then-collapsed site-specificity corresponds roughly to the use of the term situation by Krogh Groth and Samson, although they seem to emphasise the performativity embedded in their concept where

> […] the sound art situation establishes strong performative utterances that are expressed in various ways: not only do the performing artist's actions become performative, but also do the site, the history, the audience and the social circumstances. (Groth and Samson 2017, 109)

A sound art situation is then first and foremost a performative situation that has the ability to

> […] open towards an expansion of time and space: the site of performance is more than we immediately experience, but refers also to social and temporal issues that go beyond immediate experience. (Groth and Samson 2017, 109)

The sound art situation is thus construed differently compared both to the work-centred construction of significance in Kim-Cohen and to the generation of meaning by means of reduction in Voegelin. This performative construction where immediate experience is embedded in social and cultural predispositions is far more valuable to a curatorial engagement with sound precisely because it capacitates us to think context, artwork and reception as relational and inseparable. The notion of situation is thus an adequately delimiting concept in order to make sound and listening significant components while at the same time being sufficiently open to let all manners of contextual and conceptual factors affect them. In other words, it enables the aesthetics of presence and absence to not be mutually exclusive but rather each other's preconditions. And it integrates the artwork's presentation in the interpretive framework of its reception. It is in this sense that I argue that the notion of the situation has potentials that reach far beyond the empirical examples used in this chapter (as well as the ones used by Krogh Groth and Samson). It opens for an understanding of artistic, and especially curatorial, work with sound that can acknowledge and performatively negotiate its own contextual background.

However, while the notion of the sound art situation is useful for a curatorial engagement with sound because it incorporates the contextual within the interpretive framework it might leave open questions about where to locate the artwork or how to define its boundaries in relation to its context. Instead of looking narrowly at the relation between listener and sound, sound art as a conceptual and textual practice, or sound art's preoccupation with its own medium specificity, a project like the *WGSEF* can probably be productively understood if we consider the artwork in continuation of Rune Søchting's reflections on sound-based artworks. In the article "Diagram for Invisibility," the sound-based artwork is

> […] considered as a site of interaction between sonic and non-sonic elements, and could be said to set a frame for a particular relation between the constituent material elements, but also between the situation and the person engaging with it. (Søchting 2017)

This definition highlights interaction, relations, engagement and situations as the constituent elements of artworks that involve sound in a way that enables analytical engagements with presence and absence or artwork and context within sound art situations. As Søchting details, in music or cinema the context of engaging with the artworks are to a large extent given prior to the situation by the conventions of the concert hall

or cinema (seating, lighting, speaker arrangement etc.). Unlike these artforms, he argues that in sonic art practice the context of presentation is often integral to the work itself, and thus individually varying from work to work.[97]

Søchting proposes that we may approach sound-based works through the notion of the diagram taken from Foucault's famous analysis of the panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*.

> The diagram depicts the functional mechanism based on a rationalisation of space that pre-scripts a correct behaviour against an unwanted one. It is a functional principle that ties the individual to her environment and thereby encodes whatever is sensorially perceived in the light of a relational order. (Søchting 2017)

For the present purpose, this description can be fruitfully mapped onto the concept of composition proposed by G Douglas Barrett that I discussed above. This mapping has the advantage of integrating the Cagean concept of composition as a structuring principle or a functional mechanism with the situation of presentation. Søchting's description is thus useful to establish a backdrop for thinking about perception where "what is sensorially present relates to what is sensorially absent in a particular situation" (Søchting 2017). It enables an analytic approach that turns the opposition between presence and absence into a continuum where each aspect of the artwork is mutually conditioned by the other. Using this approach to analyse concrete situations where composition is unfolded thus includes both presence and absence, sounding and non-sounding elements as well as immersive listening and contextual analysis – all folded into one another as situations. This compositional element can work as a tool to explore how experience is structured in concrete situations. Both in terms of how the work in question performs and structures experience, and in terms of how this experience is always conditioned by the social, spatial and cultural context the work is experienced within. In this sense, the integration of composition and situation engenders a performative space where cultural and historical codifications intermingle with the way artworks afford and structure experience and codify time and space. [98]

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[97] The art gallery is also one such conventional space of presentation that is governed by its own sets of encoded conduct as are all other environments where sound art may be presented. This aspect is absent in Søchting's analysis eventhough sound art is just as entangled in institutional structures as any other form of art. I return to a discussion of the gallery space and the ways in which the context of presentation is significant in relation to sound in Chapter 6.

[98] While Søchting's analysis of the diagram is both compelling and has theoretical potential I have chosen not to apply it directly to my analyses. Primarily because the notion of composition

In summation, I have argued that dominant positions within sound art theory tend either to place too much emphasis on the medium specificity of sound, the statement of the artwork, or assign too much significance to an immersive listening, that is devoid of context and is staged as a critical practice in itself. The backside of this is that such positions tend to be normative in ways that establish and prescribe appropriate or adequate modes (Stockfelt 1997) of engagement with the situation without taking into account that every situation is situated and thus unique. Such discourses then run counter to museology's ambition of staging the participatory as intransitive and inclusive as well as my ambition of analysing sound as inherently contextual, relational and social. In the discussion about artistic and curatorial work with sound, the twin notions of situation and composition seem to integrate both artwork and context in a relational weave that enables both descriptive and interpretive frameworks but does not disable a critical cultural criticism and democracy by staging its own prescriptive conventions. To apply the concept of the situation to cultural analysis rather entails another position that tends toward understanding artistic work with sound performatively. This means looking primarily at what the sounding situation does, how it structures, which forms of cultural repetition it involves and how it can be understood as embedded within a wider cultural context. From this perspective a curatorial engagement with sounding situations also stages participation in opposition to the representational discourse of art history and as the "possibility to question the rules of the game" (Sternfeld 2013, 4).

My observations and analyses throughout this chapter have been made from the perspective of the curator, with a strong concern for context and contextualisation of artistic work. The downside of this approach has been that my interpretive effort in relation to the singular project of the *WGSEF* has only been rudimentary with regards to its

established earlier in the chapter is sufficient to describe the artwork as a structuring principle. Another important reason has been a wish to try to avoid the confusion that may arise from using a term that in my context would possibly conflate socially codified space with the structure of the artwork as the Foucauldian root of Søchting's argument suggests. I am not interested in this conflation but rather in the possibility to think artwork and context of presentation together in a relational manner. Furthermore, there are several differing conceptions and applications of the notion of the diagram in philosophy that would require a more careful detailing in order to make the concept applicable to my argument. For a discussion of the differences between Deleuze and Foucault in relation to the diagram, see (Teyssot 2012).

artistic contribution, particular statement, or art historic significance. This has been partially necessitated by the rhizomatic structure of the project itself but is also motivated by the desire to look at my curatorial practice from a performative point of view. In the following chapters I aim to test this theoretical apparatus more directly in relation to my curatorial practice through an investigation of how situation and composition might reinvigorate central museological discussions of the archive and the exhibition. Through this, I hope to contribute to a field where curatorial practices and sonic discourses can engage with the tensions of the cultural and historical situation the art museum currently finds itself within.

6. Archival situations

In Theodor W. Adorno's essay "Valéry Proust Museum" from 1955, he associates the museum with the mausoleum as a place that collects "objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying" (Adorno 1981, 175). He structures the essay around the contrasting views of Paul Valéry and Marcel Proust on art's relation to lived culture. Valéry comes to represent the view that "art is lost when it has relinquished its place in the immediacy of life, in its functional context" (Adorno 1981, 180). Conversely, Proust sees the potential of art in this very disjunction where "it is only the death of the work of art in the museum which brings it to life" (Adorno 1981, 182) in the mind of the spectator. Adorno writes about paintings, sculpture and scored musical works and his outlook with regard to works that show more complex temporal and spatial structures is of course delimited by the time of his writing. The association of the museum with death is motivated by art's disjuncture from social life that ensues from its entrance into the institutional apparatus. As such the disjuncture is understood in close connection to the museum collection as the place where artworks are taken out of circulation.[99] Even if Adorno's association of museum and mausoleum is anachronistic today, the issue he discusses is relevant when addressing situations and time-based artworks in the context of the museum collection as a place where artworks are radically decontextualized from the functions and contexts of the practices they originate from. In particular the notion of the situation which I developed in the previous chapter poses fundamental questions regarding the types of artworks which are able to enter the museum collection. How they might be managed and preserved for the future as well as about which elements of living culture it is desirable to document and collect as an art museum. Even if most traditional definitions of the art museum start with a collection of artworks by which the museum distinguishes itself from other types of institutions and other art museums, the insertion of the situation into this definition makes it difficult to speak about collections because collecting at art museums traditionally is object-based. As we have seen, situations are more or less defined by differing accounts, contexts, dependence upon circumstance or as variable

[99] As we shall see in the following chapter the association with death and dissociation from lived social life is equally found by in Brian O'Doherty's analyses of the exhibition space (O'Doherty 1976).

ontology worlds (Latour 1996, 175) causing an ambiguous relation to their representations. They are characterised by being processual, temporal, contingent, open, site-specific, intransitive or otherwise inconclusive – and above all they lack stable objects and finite representations. In other words situations do not necessarily produce a conclusive thing that is readily accessioned for a traditional museum collection comprising artworks. The emphasis on situations as a central element within sonic art practice (and within contemporary art in a more general sense) necessitates a shift of focus from art collections towards the archive as the important site for a sustainable acquisition and preservation of such art practices. The archive opens up a space in which the characteristics of the situation can be better decontextualized and documented from the point of view of heritage. Therefore I do not address art collections as such in the following but rather the more politically and materially unstable condition of the archive, which is governed by far less regulations compared to the museum collection regarding registration, sustainability, access and dissemination to the public. This perspective also highlights the importance of documentation as well as it necessitates a critical assessment of the usefulness of the notion of *intangible cultural heritage* in the context of the art museum in what follows. A context to which this notion may seem somewhat contradictory given the prevailing practice of collecting artworks-as-objects.

When rehanging the permanent collection show at the MFSK in early 2018, one of our main ideas was that we wanted to show how the museum from its inception in 1991 had interacted with the local community in Roskilde and how a lot of its activities had been carried out outside the walls of the museum building in the streets and elsewhere around Roskilde. I suggested that Andreas Führer's piece *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or?* (appendix 1), commissioned for the 2014 *ACTS Festival* which I wrote about in Chapter 2, would be relevant as a means to actually let our visitors go out into the streets and interact with the soundscape of Roskilde.[100] I still had some copies of the score and we would of course be able to reprint them if need be. The idea was quickly abandoned because the territory had changed while the map had remained the same. During the test walk we did we found out that three and a half years since the score had been written quite a few of the listening posts on the map had disappeared. Either the visual clues about where to listen were gone or in some cases the ventilation systems that had been

[100] At the 2014 *ACTS* Festival a lot of the performances were distributed across town, both at the museum, in the streets and squares of Roskilde and at the local music venue, Gimle.

in place during the 2014 *ACTS Festival* had been taken down – leaving the designated listening spot with no particular auditory characteristic other than the overall ambience of the town's soundscape. One of the central conditions for Führer's piece was that the artist could more or less be able to control that certain sounds would appear at certain times in the specified locations. It worked for a period but both the topography and the soundscape of the town had now changed due to mundane reasons of businesses moving in and out of buildings, restoration projects, and graffiti removal. Still the score exists as a composition but its context of performance has changed and partly disappeared, which of course affects how we may approach the work.

The reader will remember how Führer saw the piece explicitly as something to be performed and not explained (see page 36). However, with the impossibility of performing it according to the artist's intentions the status of the score changes. Either it becomes a dead end or it becomes an imaginative or speculative documentation of how, at one point in 2014, the town of Roskilde would have sounded. Or a little bit of both. From the perspective of heritage and preservation the piece is clearly in need of some sort of care in order to be restored into a state where it can be performed again. However, such restoration would turn it into another piece. If viewed as Führer imagined it, as a piece of music that you could walk around within, any revision of the piece would entail the designation of new listening posts along a new route necessitating a new score. This would change both the temporal structure and auditory experience of the piece. It would simply become another spatio-temporal experience compared to the original. Furthermore, the grainy lo-fi texture of the mobile phone photographs in the score would have been difficult to recreate already only few years from the creation of the piece due to the accelerating velocity of technology's obsolescence. It would be possible at present where it is still feasible to locate and purchase an iPhone 3, but let's think ahead and imagine that someone would try to recreate the piece in 2030. Getting the character of the score's imagery 'right' would then implicate software filtering in order to approximate 2014 mobile phone camera standards and visual aesthetic.[101] The route would also

[101] This is a recurrent concern within the conservation of media art where the problem is often expressed through the contradictory strategies of either approximating the qualities of historic media or transferring material onto contemporary media similar to the original ones. Both strategies are always a matter of the perspective and individual interpretations made by the conservator. For instance, when digitising old analogue audio tapes to digital files, this question can be whether the material should be transferred 1:1 without filtering or whether the conservator should try to compensate for the loss of sound quality due to the ageing of the tapes. Another

change. Both the concrete route through the territory but also the visual figure that the route draws on the original map. It would be a different score. Let's again think ahead and imagine how the town's infrastructure would look in the future. It is easy to see that in the less than five years the score had been lying in the archive the changing context of the town had made it impossible to perform in the way the composer had imagined it, even if the score had not changed at all. It is also easy to imagine that this decay will only increase the longer the piece sits in the archive.[102]

The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or? then in a way fulfils the promise of its own title because the territory changes and is contingent while the map remains the same. The compositional structure put forward by the score becomes impossible to realise because the town's infrastructure and soundscape changes. The visual appearance of the score goes out of sync with the territory it attempts to map. This not only adds weight to the notion of the situational as a defining characteristic of sonic arts practice but it also introduces a tension between the situational and the and the compositional. The composition now seems to overtake how we can understand the piece, while the situational with historical distance recedes into the background. The piece becomes historic because its concrete context has changed, which may lend privilege to a textual reading

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example, discussed by Hanna Hölling in relation to the restoration of an installation by Nam June Paik is whether the restoration should try to use the original materials or try to approximate the original appearance by the replacement of (then "inauthentic") materials (Hölling 2017, 1-5).

[102] This problematic has been addressed in musicology in terms of historically informed performance, period performance and/or authentic performance. These debates have mainly been concerned with questions of the extent to which it is even possible (and desirable) to try to recreate performances as they may originally have sounded. The concept of authenticity plays a major role in these debates, which can be summed up by a dichotomy between a purism that tries and thinks it is possible to recreate a musical work as it was originally intended by its composer – and on the other side, a presentism that argues that such efforts will only ever be approximations (or informed guesses) and thus betray both ideas of performance histories as ongoing processes as well as portray a false ideal of authenticity as something that emanates from the composer's intention. (see for instance (Goehr 1992, Butt 2002) and (Kivy 2002)) However, this is a debate that primarily concerns expert performers and scholarly historiography. In the case of *The Map is Not the Territory D'Or?* where the audience are the performers, the impossibility of performance arises directly from the changing context of the territory – the town of Roskilde that makes it impossible to discern the audible events alone by reading the score. If, as our test walk revealed, there is nothing significant (i.e. ventilation systems) to listen for and/or the visual clues about where to stand and listen are missing at the first three designated listening posts, the idea of the piece becomes too vague nearing the pointless for the performers. It simply does not function anymore and is in need of thorough revision in order to be performable at all.

of the score at the expense of concrete performances of walking, breathing and listening. The situated bodily experience of the piece thus becomes less significant with time spent in the archive. We can still read the score and analyse how experiencing the piece had been structured. We can still do the breathing exercises. And we can still listen to ventilation systems but we cannot experience *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or?* as the exact piece of music Führer originally intended to be. In other words the archive radically decontextualizes situations and temporarily arrests the fluidity, site-specificity and intransitivity of performance and propagating sound. The archive cannot be held to account for what happens on its outside. It separates its contents from their situation and puts them in need of recontextualisation when retrieved into audible time, visible space or performance situations. In this sense time does not pass in the same way inside the archive as it does on its outside.

Aside from the problems and temporal implications of de- and recontextualisation of the concrete performative situation described in the above, Führer's piece is after all relatively easily archivable because of its finite and authored appearance as a score for a musical soundwalk printed on a piece of paper. It has a tangible, material appearance. The score is easily archivable even if the situation which it was originally envisioned to engender cannot be recreated due to changing external contexts. The composition is not substantially affected by the archive itself and the archiving of such work will only need to concern itself with the level and nature of sufficient documentation and preservation in order to maintain the conditions of possibility for the piece's recontextualisation and recreation into a new situation. However, the original context and situation will always have disappeared or changed and can only be partially documented. The maintenance of the situational qualities of such archival records thus demands a sustained preservation effort if their connection to their contexts are to be upheld. As territories change maps need to be updated. The reconstruction of such context and situation will most likely depend on other documents and elements internal or external to the museum archive. In this sense situation becomes text and working with sounding situations retrieved from the archive comes to resemble any other hermeneutic or philological endeavour.

Following this logic sounding situations are then radically decontextualized and recontextualized once they enter the archive – and equally radically decontextualized/recontextualized again once they are retrieved and listened to in an exhibitory situation, to

which I will return in the next chapter. Regarding the archive this movement between different states of situations necessitates a concentrated and sustained documentation effort in order to maintain and preserve the relation between the map and the territory. Between the compositional structure and the situational aspects of the work in question. For political and economic reasons that I will discuss later in this chapter, such concentrated preservation efforts for archival materials are rare compared to the level of attention given to the preservation of artworks in the museum collection proper.

The practice of *Aggressive Listening*

The question of documentation differs dramatically if we turn to Tobias R. Kirstein and Claus Haxholm's idea and practice of *Aggressive Listening*. In the preface I presented their durational performance *Work is what separates us from the animals* from the 2014 *ACTS Festival* held at the MFSK. The performance had come about as part of their ongoing, long term collaboration which I had become interested in on the basis of a short conversation I had with Kirstein after their performance *Grundtoner* held at Kunsthal 44 Møen in the summer of 2013. The duo had dug two rather large holes in the garden outside artist Henning Christiansen's (1932-2008) archive into which they put speakers playing sine waves.[103] Some of the excavated gravel was placed in the main entrance of the adjacent archive building and gallery space. When they had finished digging there was an intermission where each performer sat on top of one of the speakers in the holes reading a book while the speakers were still playing sine tones. After this intermission they filled up the holes, burying the (still playing) speakers. I had arrived a little late and only seen the very end of this performance but I was interested in the work. I was particularly intrigued by a comment that Kirstein made during our subsequent conversation where he stated that he did not care much for documentation now that the work had been done. He showed me his blistered hands and explained how the manual labour had now been absorbed in their bodies as physical evidence of the hard work. For him the important thing was the transformation of energy and he cared more for the action itself and its possible sculptural and sonic outcome than he did for representing it by explanation or through documentation.[104]

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[103] The performance took place at the opening festival for the exhibition "A Hammer Without a Master: Henning Christiansen's Archive" at Kunsthal 44 Møen in summer 2013.

[104] The conversation is produced from memory. As this was before my research for the dissertation formally began, I do not have field notes to support it.

Later that summer at *LAK Festival for Nordisk Lydkunst* in Copenhagen, the duo did another performance. It was late at night on the outside grounds of a former industrial complex that was now transformed into an urban festival site with indoor and outdoor sound installation spaces and a large concert venue in the old factory buildings. Haxholm and Kirstein's outdoor performance was announced in the programme as a "live-installation" somewhere in between "drone music, activism and psychogeography".[105] In this performance they played drone sounds at very low volume from speakers distributed across the outside space where people were hanging out and drinking beers in-between concerts. It was quite late in the evening; the crowd was in a festive mood and accordingly the level of conversation was rather loud and as a consequence the drone sounds were sometimes difficult to distinguish from the overall noisy soundscape. From time to time Kirstein or Haxholm would go behind the mixer to slightly and almost imperceptibly alter the sounds but most of the time they would just be hanging out, having a beer, talking to the other festival-goers most of whom seemed unaware that a performance was going on. A colleague of mine got provoked, I think, by the casual nonchalance and understated performance of the artists, and by the lack of clear, discernible aesthetic expression or intention. In the brief conversation that we had with Kirstein during the performance he was reluctant to say that it was about anything besides, by way of slightly intervening in the soundscape, it could be seen as an experiment with the social situation of what is usually happening at a festival late at night and in-between very loud concerts. He seemingly did not care if anyone noticed that there was a performance going on – rather he was interested in the possibility of almost insignificant social transformations. The ways in which the sound, however imperceptible, would alter the situation. This was also the first time I was briefly introduced to what later came to be called *Aggressive Listening* – a practice that Kirstein and Haxholm had developed and carried out for themselves at various occasions. For example by sitting on a bench reading by the lakes in Copenhagen while playing sine tones at low volume from their mobile phones – or by playing sine tones while eating burgers at a restaurant. Kirstein also added that the present iteration of this practice as a scheduled performance at the festival-site almost gave it too much character of an

[105] Festival programme, retrieved from https://issuu.com/mettesanggaard/docs/indhold-issuu (Accessed December 5, 2016).

artwork even if most people did not notice that there was a scheduled performance going on.[106] I was immediately intrigued by this practice that he described as something they would usually do just for themselves as a way of creating a frame for an activity or a frame for listening in a different way. Later I learned that the artists also had been sitting at the festival site during the afternoon reading while playing sine tones at a low volume from their mobile phones.

The term *Aggressive Listening* came later, after the *ACTS Festival*, during our ongoing conversations and correspondences which eventually resulted in the publication of *Handbook of Aggressive Listening* (Haxholm, Kirstein, and Holmboe 2018). As Kirstein wrote, he wanted to

> […] create a piece of art that was not a product and didn't leave a physical trace. It should be nonexpressive and based in a sort of inner movement of the performer. Listening and recording did this. I started doing this in the streets. Sometimes just turn on a discrete sine wave on the mobile phone to create a new frame for the listening.
>
> I found traces of this in WS Burroughs taperecorder activism and the situationistic 'derive'. A sort of territorial aggressive listening that changes the surroundings. (Tobias R. Kirstein, email correspondence 23 February 2016)[107]

In this sense *Aggressive Listening* is an idea or a proposition that is free for every- and anyone to take up, use, experiment with and transform for themselves. Even though it was Kirstein who coined the term it had come about as a consequence of several converging practices and conversations and no clear ownership can be assigned to it. Rather *Aggressive Listening* is a form of understated activism. A suggestion to listen differently by way of directing your attention to the social and sounding environment that you are constantly embedded in and moving through. As such *Aggressive Listening* is not an artwork that forces its presence upon you. Rather it is a proposition or an experimental attitude that you can adopt – or not. It is a rather unassuming action and a malleable practice that is transformed each time it is carried out and is co-dependent with the spatial and social context and environment in which it takes place and which it simultaneously alters.

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[106] The account of this conversation is also produced from memory. As this was before my research for the dissertation formally began I do not have field notes to support it.

[107] This formulation eventually ended up both in the application that got the funding for the *Handbook of Aggressive Listening* as well as in the book itself (Haxholm, Kirstein, and Holmboe 2018).

As the above descriptions of performances show *Aggressive Listening* is also one of the fundamental ideas in Haxholm and Kirstein's collaborative practice, even if it iterates itself in changing ways and is not very clearly stated. In 2018, Haxholm, Kirstein and I published *Handbook of Aggressive Listening* (Haxholm, Kirstein, and Holmboe 2018), which is probably the most tangible and elaborate attempt to describe the practice so far. The book contains a small tone generator that emits a 10kHz tone at a volume that is close to imperceptible, but still present. The contents of the book are a mix of imperatives and propositions, poems, photo documentation of performances, scores, drawings, quotes, notes and an essay in in ten parts written by theorist Ulrik Schmidt. As such the book is probably the closest that the idea of *Aggressive Listening* has come to assuming the properties of a stable artwork or a statement. Yet the book is also a proposition and aggressive listening is a practice that has to be performed, experienced and contextualised in a concrete environment by a concrete listener. Understood as a practice *Aggressive Listening* can only be traced through a series of past iterations in different contexts and media, without these contexts and media necessarily exhausting or capturing the idea itself. *Aggressive Listening* thus shifts the problematic from documentation of performance understood as temporally delimited events to the much more fluid field of practice. Thus it highlights a tension in much contemporary work with sound, where the borders between the artwork and its surroundings are becoming increasingly permeable by social, conceptual, material and temporal aspects. In this situational field of practice, traditional ideas of the artwork as a delimited material and conceptual object or statement that can be documented become difficult to retain as well as the element of practice highlights the performative dimensions of audience reception.

As a practice and a form of transformatory activism the conceptual idea of *Aggressive Listening* seems more elusive and intangible than Führer's piece. Even if it has found its way into concrete artworks, performances, exhibitions, everyday situations and the recent publication of a handbook it is still a practice carried out by a couple of artists and whoever else finds it interesting. The *Handbook of Aggressive Listening* (Haxholm, Kirstein, and Holmboe 2018) may best be understood as a document, the character of which lies somewhere between manual and documentation, hovering between past and future, archive and proposition. It is an iteration of the practice that tries to circle in on the experimental and malleable characteristics of the idea while attempting to retain its

basic openness. As already stated none of the instantiations of *Aggressive Listening* seem to have exhausted the idea nor presented it in any final form. Rather the artists constantly seem to obstruct the idea before it becomes too manifestly expressed or represented. Instead they try to let it operate as a form of covert auditory espionage that cannot be explained or experienced through representations but only enacted. As such there is a certain avant-garde ethos connected to *Aggressive Listening* that in many ways aligns it with Peggy Phelan's famous critique of the representation of performance. Here Phelan states that

> […] performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. (Phelan 1993, 146)

One of the important elements in the economy of reproduction she criticises is the museum that in her text implicitly forms part of the "smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital" (Phelan 1993, 148). In this logic performance art's temporal dimension renders it subversive to the economy because it operates at strictly ephemeral plane that resists representation: Once the event has passed it disappears and reveals an absence that produces memory as difference from the uniqueness of the event. For Phelan performance is ontologically "undocumentable" (Phelan 1993, 148). When viewed like this performance art posits an archival problem for the museum because it cannot enter the archive or collection on which the museum is founded without being fundamentally destroyed. Performance's ontology according to Phelan is in other words in direct opposition to the internal logic of the archive and thus also to the Western idea of the museum. However, in the book *Performing Remains* performance scholar Rebecca Schneider turns this question upside down by asking rethorically:

> If we consider performance as "of" disappearance, if we think of the ephemeral as that which "vanishes" and if we think of performance as the antithesis of preservation, do we limit ourselves to an understanding of performance predetermined by cultural habituation to the patrilineal, West-identified (arguably white-cultural) logic of the archive? (Schneider 2011, 97)

She notes how art history and curatorial discourse has been particularly suitable environments to support the claim that performance is that which disappears and that

> […] curatorial pressure to understand performance in the museal context appeared to challenge the object status and seemed to refuse the archive its privileged "savable" original. (Schneider 2011, 98)

The apparent oppositions between performance and archive, between context-bound and temporal arts and their preservation, between volatility and stability, are all relevant in discussions of how situations relate to the archive. From a performance art point of view that emphasises the subversive potential of performance it is indeed difficult to delimit and represent *Aggressive Listening* in the archive by its ensuing objects or documentation of concrete iterations. And according to the artists it probably should not be. However, I think in prolongation of my readings of Grant Kester in the previous chapter that the views expressed by Phelan more than 20 years ago are more than ready to be engaged with from a denaturalised perspective. The museum institution has changed considerably since Phelan's critique. As has the ways the archive is currently being construed. Performance art too is no longer solely thought of in terms of liveness and disappearance. As performance historian Amelia Jones has shown in relation to Marina Abramovic it rather involves a complex and often contradictory layering of documentation, simulation and self-representation. All of which point to the observation that "there cannot be a definitively "truthful" or "authentic" form of the live event even at the moment of its enactment" (Jones 2011, 19). With this in mind it seems that Rebecca Schneider's observation that the idea of disappearance is not part of performance's ontology but in fact originates in the archive can open for other conceptions of that archive adequate to practices like *Aggressive Listening*. However, before returning to that discussion it is important to qualify the idea of practice in relation to the archive. Sustaining a transforming and transformatory practice like *Aggressive Listening* from a museum perspective, which includes questions of heritage, could possibly benefit from a different perspective than that offered by object-based, representational, tangible heritage and its documentation. If it is maintained that the ethos of the practice lies within its elements of secrecy, and especially in the suggestion to perform it as a personal practice in concrete everyday situations, it would be more sustainable from a museum perspective to approach it relative to notions of intangible cultural heritage – eventhough it can and has been documented in tangible forms such as writing, sound recordings, photos etc.

Tangible and intangible heritage

These challenges posed by *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or* and *Aggressive Listening* in relation to museum collections and archives are of course not new. Questions related to ephemerality and the institution have been voiced from within various disciplines since 1960s' expansions of the art scene. Related to performance art we have been faced with questions similar to Phelan's that relate to the archive and representation: Is the valuation of performance's supposed liveness predicated upon it's mediatisation (Auslander 2008)? What are the appropriate documentation strategies and archival objects for performance and time-based artistic formats (Reason 2006)? What is the relation between performance and text (script) (Worthen 2007) or between repertoire and archive (Taylor 2003)? Is it in fact the act of documenting that enframes performance art as performance art (Auslander 2006)? Similar questions have also been explored in connection to relational art, social art practice and activist art: How do we deal with the work of art when it is understood as a formation of dynamic relations (Bourriaud 2002) that are contingent upon a certain material and social context? Seeing that much of this work is being made on a temporal scale and outside of the conventional art system (Groys 2016, Kester 2013) and its institutions, how then does the change of context when exhibiting and collecting affect the meaning of the work in question? How, from a heritage perspective, do museums deal with the distributed and often dialogic structure (Kester 2013) of such work?

Much of the work done in the above areas has presupposed that artistic practice takes on some or other form of critique. Either in the face of the power distribution instituted by the museum and the collection or by resisting the institutionalisation inherent to working in the context of the museum or art market. However, the avant-garde ethos that connects to such presuppositions seems a little anachronistic today. For better or worse artistic practices, the market, institutions, expediency and cultural policies increasingly form a complex ecology within which the archetypical negation of classic avant-garde art must necessarily be seen in the contexts of a *relative* autonomy (Bolt 2016, 19-20) and the conditions of immaterial labour under which it is carried out. Especially regarding museums and other arts institutions that form part of this market ecology, the idea of an artistic or curatorial avant-garde ethos is difficult to maintain. In the following I suggest a broader view of art production understood as cultural prac-

tice. I do this again with inspiration from Grant Kester's attempts to question the "normative conventions of art theory itself" (Kester 2011, 11) from a denaturalised perspective. From such a perspective the autonomous status of the artwork and the romanticised cult of the artist that still haunts art history can be circumvented in order to search for viable ways of sustaining situational practices *as* heritage – ways which are not necessarily as firmly rooted in the cultural status of the artwork-as-object.

As already hinted the notion of intangible cultural heritage may be of value here precisely because its motivation originates outside the predominantly Western art world value system. As a term, intangible cultural heritage has been developed by the UNESCO since the 1950s to describe what was previously called folklore. The term thus originates in ethnology rather than art history. As performance scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has remarked there has been an important shift in the apprehension of intangible heritage by which institutions are now not only concerned with collecting the objects ensuing from living practices but also with sustaining "a living, if endangered, tradition by supporting the conditions necessary for cultural reproduction" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, 52). Taken as such the concept can easily be applied to a practice like *Aggressive Listening* that is both living and in need of sustenance. On a broader level the idea of intangible heritage could also apply to many other performative and situational art practices, which due to their often-dispersed activities are likely to fly under the radar of funding bodies and/or take place outside the confines of established art institutions.

However, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notices, intangible cultural heritage is not an unproblematic category. In her critique she addresses a tendency within the UNESCO – among other things through the publication of the list of "Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" [108] that was first published in 2001 – that local cultural reproduction has not actually been supported as fields of practice but rather endorsed through metacultural production and promoted as canonical lists of world heritage. She also notes that there is a latent contradiction within the term where the vitality and self-sustainability of a given phenomenon becomes an important parameter when trying to safeguard practices: "if it is truly vital, it does not need safeguarding: if it is almost dead, safeguarding will not help" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, 56). The key to

[108] See https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000147344 (Accessed March 5, 2019).

this is whether a practice or phenomenon is deemed endangered. Even if the notion of intangible cultural heritage that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett criticises is primarily connected with cultural practices stemming from outside the traditional Western conception of the fine arts her observations point to a problem that is central to any archival engagement with a practice like *Aggressive Listening*. Within the art market a concept or practice like *Aggressive Listening* has little economic currency as an artwork to be bought and sold. Thus from the perspective of the art museum Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's critique also touches upon the cornerstone of the modern idea of the museum itself by instigating questions about what the museum's role should be vis-à-vis practices like this. Should we try to preserve them through collecting their ensuing artefacts and thus effectively turn practice into metacultural narrative by way of documentation and/or adaptation to the museum's penchant for tangible artworks? Or should we try to sustain them as living practices and effectively reframe the discussion of heritage at the art museum from questions of representation to questions of production, sustenance and presentation of cultural practices? Following Mads Kullberg we should probably do both. As he has shown, the distinction between tangible and intangible heritage should not be seen as an opposition but rather as a relation where both are necessary in order to embrace the fact that "change is intrinsic to culture" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, 56 in Kullberg 2016, 40). The question of tangible vs. intangible is then not a question of either/or but rather one of both/and which means that culture itself has to be construed relationally as both material and immaterial.[109]

Archival policies

The current ICOM Museum Definition[110] states that museums should acquire, conserve, research, communicate and exhibit both tangible and intangible heritage. Despite this the prevalent mode of collecting and the supporting tools for registration of art across the broad range of Danish museums are still oriented toward the tangible – that is toward object-based collecting. Especially at the art museums, as Mads Kullberg has also noted, there is a discrepancy between the object-based tradition for collecting and

[109] For more comprehensive discussions on the inexpedient consequences of a sharp division between tangible and intangible heritage, see (Kullberg 2016) and (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004).

[110] See https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/ (Accessed 27 February, 2019).

registering art works on the one hand and on the other hand the art scene, which since the 1960s, has increasingly become more and more invested in intangible and ephemeral practices where the artwork often takes the form of an event (Kullberg 2016, 8-18). Kullberg suggests that art museums could learn from ethnographic museums concerning the collection and registration of cases or events instead of the somewhat unilateral focus on artworks as objects (Kullberg 2016, 99-100). In this connection it should be noted that the new national registration system, SARA, that is being implemented at all state-subsidised museums in Denmark from the fall of 2018, seems to push registration practice even further toward object-based registration – also at ethnographic museums and museums of cultural history. In the previous system, Regin, ethnographic objects were registered only as parts of a case (which could be tied to an event, a place or a function) whereas in SARA objects have now become the primary unit of registration across all types of museums (except museums of natural science). From a point of view that concerns itself with database structure and metadata compatibility this is probably a more consistent solution compared to previous registration practice and its interfaces. However, it is also a consolidation of an object-based mode of collecting. It should be noted that SARA does allow for the possibility, now also for art museums, to use the categories of cases or events with which the registered objects can be related in the database. The positive side of this is that it has now been made possible, also for art museums, to have registration of archive fonds[111] in the same registration database as their collections of artworks. And that these records can be related to artworks, artists, events and other elements in the database. This is after all a window of opportunity that enables art museums to handle archival records of events or practices such as *Aggressive Listening* where there is no object and where all documentation is contingent and pointing to something which is absent, intangible and/or immaterial. As such it has been made possible to register artworks that have no object and which can only be accessed through various forms of documentation. Although to the best of my knowledge this is not yet the practice at any Danish art museums.

[111] An archive fond (or record group) is here understood as "a collection of archive records derived from the same archive source, e.g. a person, an association, a company or an institution." Original wording in Danish: "En Arkivfond defineres som arkivalier, der stammer fra den samme arkivskaber, f.eks. en person, en forening, en erhvervsvirksomhed eller en institution." (N.N. 2018, 9).

Turning our attention to the guide for the museums' registration and reporting to the central national registers issued by The Agency for Culture and Palaces [Slots- og Kulturstyrelsen] (N.N. 2018) in connection to the launch of SARA might give us an indication of the reasons why. The information about the registration of archival material given in this guide is ambivalent as it addresses both art museums and museums of cultural history that in Denmark have historically had quite different practices of registration. In accord with the Museum Act (Jelved 2014) this guide states that apart from reporting artworks and artefacts to the central national registers, museums are under obligation to also report "other documentation" (N.N. 2018, 3) to these registers. Other documentation is here understood as "the other categories of objects in a museum file:[112] photographs, documents, audio/video recordings and graphic material" (N.N. 2018, 3, my translation).[113] Later in the document it is stated that there is

> […] no obligation to report archival material according to the Museum Act. Hence there is no minimum requirements for the registration of archival materials. (N.N. 2018, 9, my translation)[114]

The difference between "other documentation" and "archival material" is thus very unclear and it is recommended in the guide that the distinction is made on the grounds of the context in which the given material has been accessioned by the museum. There are historic reasons for this confusion. Previously the registration interfaces for museums of cultural history and art museums were different. Art museums used Regin Kunst [regin art] to register artworks and museums for cultural history used Regin Kulturhistorie [regin cultural history] to register objects and museum files (or cases). Significantly, art museums did not have the option to register and report items other than artworks in Regin and the categories available for this registration were based solely on objects. The, until very recently, applicable (last accessed on 6 October 2018 and removed from the SLKS website, www.slks.dk, sometime during October 2018) guide to the registration of artworks "SMN/INFORMATION nr. 2" (Fabritius 1982) gives us an

[112] The term "museum file" roughly corresponds to the category of case or event identified in the above as one of the new options for registration in the national registration system SARA.

[113] Original wording in Danish: "Anden dokumentation forstås som de øvrige objektkategorier i en museumssag: fotografier, dokumenter, audio/video optagelser, og grafisk materiale."

[114] Original wording in Danish: "Der er ikke er [sic!] indberetningspligt på arkivalsk materiale i henhold til museumsloven. Der er derfor ikke opstillet minimumskrav til registrering af arkivalier."

indication of the reasons for this. In this document it is implicitly understood that documentation held at art museums some way or another should relate to artworks held in the museum's collection. From this we can infer that artworks that are or consist of objects are the primary obligation and concern as related to acquisition, registration, documentation and conservation at art museums. However, at the very end of the 1982 document there is a small passage that specifies that archival materials that cannot be related directly to artworks that are held in the museum collection, should be marked for identification, summarised in a directory and related to an artists' register. In such orderly and accessible fashion it is deemed in the guide to be of later value to art historical research.[115] In summation, the standard guidelines for the definition of documentation is thus described as elements that document and describe the creation, history, provenance and other characteristics of an inventoried artwork in a museum collection whereas "other archival material" is only of possible future art historical interest. This is much in line with the present formulation in the 2018 guide where objects collected as part of an archive fond (of which it is only stated that they ought to be registered in SARA and thus reported to the national database) are associated with the purpose of "being held as potential source material" (N.N. 2018, 9, my translation).[116]

It is easy to see that even if the tools for registration to a greater extent have been made suitable for the handling, preservation and documentation of practices like *Aggressive Listening*, these tools do not solve the schism between art practice and art object. Between the intangible and tangible on the level of what might be called the politics of the art museum collection and/or the museum archive's function in relation to the sustenance of intangible practices. As Boris Groys has argued, the

> […] 'Museum of Contemporary Art' […] is collecting the profane objects of the everyday life or of the socially deviant, but as not valuable regarded practices, and 'revaluates' them into art. (Groys 1993, 73)

Following this logic, which resonates with the argument that Adorno ascribes to Valéry, the elements of practice and the intransitivity connected with intangibility transform themselves and lose their connection to the very practice once they are accessioned by the museum. In Groys' argument the museum collection not only arrests time but also

[115] The precise wording in Danish: "I ordnet og dermed tilgængelig stand vil et sådant arkiv blive et primært kildemateriale, som siden vil kunne bidrage til den kunsthistoriske forskning."

[116] Original wording in Danish: "Hvis objekterne er indsamlet som del af en arkivfond med det formål at opbevares som potentielt kildemateriale."

transforms the social space of practice and situation into a "universal space of historical comparison" (Groys 1993, 73). Such an assimilation of *Aggressive Listening* to a universalising logic of the collection would alter the practice or even turn it into something other than a practice – perhaps more in the vein of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's metacultural narrative. Extending Groys' argument this would turn *Aggressive Listening* into an element in the very economy that the practice tries to critique and avoid. In continuation of this observation Groys' argument has even wider ramifications because the museum collection itself is that "space of historical comparison" (Groys 1993, 76) that enables artists to imagine something that is different from the present body of the collection itself. In other words, the knowledge of institutionalised artworks within collections writ large is the fuel for imagining the new and thus "the museum comparison precedes the creation of art and defines it" (Groys 1993, 79). This is a very institutionally determined point of view to impose on a practice like *Aggressive Listening* that explicitly tries to circumvent such mechanisms. However, to Groys there is a direct dialectic between the desire within such a practice to avoid the traditional art market's object-oriented mechanisms and modes of consumption on the one hand, and the ways in which this market determines and enables such desire on the other hand. According to this reasoning nothing is envisioned outside the logic of the market (which includes the museum collection) – especially not that which seemingly tries to defy that very market. From the perspective of cultural heritage it is then important for future art practices that museums become enabled to somehow collect works and practices like *Aggressive Listening*, which are critical of the market and thus create a future space of comparison that does not rest entirely on corporate and private market interests. I shall return to the possibilities for such enabling by the end of this chapter. Its importance has been underlined elsewhere by Groys who has remarked that "only the museum gives the observer the opportunity to differentiate between old and new, past and present" (Groys 2008, 21) and that this historical comparison is necessary as a bulwark against which the contemporary can be measured and mapped onto the past as a way of generating the present on other terms than those of the market and the mass media. The questions for a curatorial and institutional engagement with heritage and the archive raised by this discussion are many. On a general level of intangibility that relates to tradition and politics at the museum it may be asked whether art museums are well enough motivated and equipped to collect and exhibit art that is not predominantly made within the object-based tradition of the visual arts? How, from a technical and

practical point of view, should we go about collecting and archiving such work when contexts and situations crucial to the understanding and performance of the artwork and situation constantly change and disappear?

Archive as a grey zone[117]

Andreas Führer's piece has its own relatively autonomous structure as a musical composition which can, at least in principle, be conceptually reimagined. However, the understanding of the practice of *Aggressive Listening* will to a larger extent be affected by the internal structure of the archive itself, as well as the preferences and interests of the archivist (in this case myself). This is how the archive decontextualizes or tends to overwrite the composition of the artwork (Holmboe 2009) when this is situational and contingent. Likewise, from a political and economic point of view, the reality of what it may be possible to attain funding to acquire for an art museum archive is another question that becomes pressing when thinking in terms of situations rather than object-based artworks. When viewed from the perspective that Groys subscribes to, acquisition politics can only be understood as an institutional performance of power and identity, the function of which is to produce the institution in the public eye. This means that museums (as well as the foundations and donors that fund their acquisitions) in order to build their institutional identity and cultural capital will have to look closely to the market and attention-economic value of possible future acquisitions as some of the main deciding and determining factors when considering whether or not something would 'fit into' the collection profile. This is especially the case concerning the acquisition of contemporary art where art history and related discourses have not yet been as effective in the filtering and selection process as in the case of acquiring historical and already canonised and marketed artworks (Søndergaard 2016, 185). With the decline of public funding for museums (Bishop 2013, 9) this is a rising tendency. Foundations and other donors that support such acquisitions are also in need of visibility in exchange for the money they donate. It almost goes without saying that covert, unassuming and highly situational practices like *Aggressive Listening* easily fall in between chairs within this economy where marketable visual appeal and communicable ease is in high

[117] I owe thanks to conservator at SMK, The National Gallery of Denmark, Louise Cone who at an internal research meeting in 2018 addressed the gap in between a museum's collections and its archives in relation to time-based art practices and artworks as a grey zone.

demand.[118] The question imposing itself from this observation is whether or not performance and situational practices like *Aggressive Listening* are in fact better off outside the value systems of the museum collection and archive? Is it at all possible to sustain them in a viable way within such a value system without turning their critical potential into marketable objects (of which the handbook itself is of course also an example)? From the above arguments it is clear that the task of continuously building, maintaining and sustaining an archive of a living practice lies outside the interest, scope and economy of most contemporary art museums. Precisely because of the lack of appropriate registration tools as well as communicable ease and visual appeal of practices that have no stable object. According to Morten Søndergaard this potentially constitutes a problem because contemporary practices often have a "strategic expression" (Søndergaard 2016, 185, my translation) deeply embedded in the social fabric of their own time. This expression may be lost if the remnants of these practices are only collected in hindsight according to the normal processes of historicization and canonisation that motivate most acquisition policies.

However, in support of their acquisition and exhibition policies museums also increasingly build their identity on events programming and other short-term activities that are able to generate attention and visitors. As Claire Bishop has remarked art museums are becoming increasingly "presentist" (Bishop 2013, 15) meaning that collections and heritage issues are pressed to the background in favour of a focus where "contemporaneity is being staged on the level of the *image*: the new, the cool, the photogenic, the well-designed, the economically successful" (Bishop 2013, 12). Claire Bishop references Rosalind Krauss' foresighted article "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum" from 1990 (Krauss 1990) in which Krauss debates how American museums in the course of the 1980s came to rely more and more on the art market. In her analyses of minimalism's relation to the museum, Krauss draws the conclusion that the museum now offers a field of experience that is "no longer history, but space itself" (Krauss 1990, 17) – by space she refers to spatial experience as well as spectacle. Although the

[118] In this context it is perhaps telling that the funding for the publication of the *Handbook of Aggressive Listening* came from The Danish Art Council's pool for music releases experimenting with their format, which was administered by the Music Production Committee. This was to the best of our estimate the best way to get funding for the project we had in mind. At the time there were no available grants within the Visual Arts Project Funding Committee or Literary Project Funding Committee where the guidelines would have suited a project like this.

American museum model relies less on public funding than the European one, this is a development that we are increasingly facing in Europe too. As Claire Bishop points out, the public funding for museums have gradually decreased making museums more dependent on private foundations and donors (Bishop 2013, 9). The consequence seems to be that funding bodies are more likely to buy into this economy of presentism insofar as the initiatives are innovative and generate visibility. As such the funding for activities that are visible and communicable and activities that directly produce content have become increasingly attainable at the cost of the more traditional hidden or behind-the-scenes museum functions of preserving and maintaining the archive and collection.[119]

In summation it seems that both (attention) economy, legislation as well as registration practice and guidelines all help create a gap or a grey zone between artworks understood as objects in a traditional tangible sense and artistic work understood as intangible situational practices. Here the new registration system SARA and its official guidelines both maintain and reinforce the liberal economy of the art market as well as a concept of the artwork, which is deeply rooted in modernist conceptions of aura, authenticity, singularity and individualism. As my work throughout this dissertation shows, there is a great deal of significant and important contemporary artistic work with which the museum collection and archive still sits uneasily: artistic work tied to situations. Such work is likely to stay in the grey zone and partly fall out of cultural memory unless the purpose and conditions of museum archives are revaluated.

Archive as apparatus

So far I have described how the sustenance of sonic situations are conditioned by the present state of the museum archive. What remains to be investigated is the ways in which the sounding situations interact with the archive when examined in a more general sense. In the context of the archive sound can be recorded or otherwise documented and stored just as it can be played back and its records can be displayed in the exhibition. However, records of sound within the archive are not audible and lack a physical and social space to reverberate within. The archival situation mutes sound and arrests time. It decontextualizes the situation and constitutes a new form of situation compared

[119] This point resonates with my analyses in chapter 3 of the recent changes to the Danish Museum Act where I showed how actualisation of heritage and its relevance for the public is now prioritised over the five traditional core values in the ICOM definition: acquisition, registration, preservation, research and communication.

to the ones I have been discussing here and in the previous chapter. Every archive, including sound archives, has and produces its own (infra)structure that is imposed on and developed in tandem with its contents and uses (Holmboe 2009). In the archive records of sound intermingle with other types of records and metadata as well as with the internal operations of and external pressures on the archive itself. These operations and pressures are potentially indifferent to the situations that the records in the archive are thought to be documenting. In that sense records of sound are silent documents among many others that can be retrieved and read as documents. Their recontextualisation into sounding situations is quite another and more complicated operation that I will deal with in part in the next chapter.

As stated earlier, the very logic of the archive itself may be understood as an instance of our "cultural habituation to the patrilineal, West-identified (arguably white-cultural)" (Schneider 2011, 97) way of conceiving our relation to the past. Following this understanding, our cultural inclination toward the archive produces the sense of loss (and ultimately death)[120] associated with the disappearance of temporal and situational performances. This observation motivates questions of whether or not it is desirable at all to try to subordinate the contemporary situational practices I have described to this predominantly modernist conception of the archive – or whether there is a need to reconfigure the idea of the archive itself. As a museum professional I will argue that the archive is necessary in order to maintain a cultural memory with which we can balance contemporary social life. This is a point that I already made above where, with Boris Groys, I argued that the museum (in its archival capacity) is the only institution that "gives the observer the opportunity to differentiate between old and new, past and present" (Groys 2008, 21), and that this opportunity is crucial in order to navigate critically in contemporary late-capitalism. Adding further emphasis to the motivation for the importance of the archive one need only to look at the proliferation of various forms of documentation and archival materials, which in recent years have been used extensively within art exhibitions alongside or in substitution of artworks. The borders between artworks and documentation have become increasingly permeable. From that point of view it should be obvious that archival materials are indispensable in order to understand art since the 1960s. However, as I have showed these materials are vulnerable

[120] Schneider's critique builds on an extensive reading of Jacques Derrida's foundational text *Archive Fever* (Derrida 1995).

and have limited support structure and economic value in our present cultural institutional economy. Even if they are gaining increasing practical, historical and, indeed, critical relevance.

To reconfigure the idea of the museum archive in this context we need to include a broader concept that understands the archive as not necessarily connected to a physical place or a delimited collection of registered records – but rather as a structure that permeates contemporary everyday life beyond the museum. While I agree with Schneider that the idea of the archive partly rests on outmoded modernist ideologies, I still believe, with Groys, that the museum archive is absolutely necessary in order to understand our present and to generate a better future. However, the idea of a self-sufficient museum archive segregated from its (archival) surroundings is questionable for a number of reasons. In this context archaeologist Michael Shanks has made an argument for the development, through what he has termed archives 1.0 and 2.0, of the advent of an Archive 3.0 (Shanks 2008). This update to the archive challenges the idea of an authoritative museum archive and thus also the ideas of the museum as a public instrument for measures of governmentality that I analysed in Chapter 3.

According to Michael Shanks and Connie Svabo, Archive 1.0 is connected to bureaucratic practice in, "for example, the early city-states of Mesopotamia, with temple and palace archives, and with writing/inscription as an instrument of management" (Shanks and Svabo 2013, 98). Importantly, as performance scholar Gabriella Giannachi has argued, Archive 1.0 was firmly connected with power. Firstly in connection to the place in which it was held, and secondly in connection to the archiving authority (Giannachi 2016, 8). However, in late-Victorian England,

> […] the archive became a function of Empire, taking "the form not of a specific institution but of an ideological construction for projecting the epistemological extension of Britain". (Giannachi 2016, 8)[121]

Within this wider view the archive can easily be seen as an instrument for the inscription of power firmly located within and created by the state or other administrative bodies. The change from Archive 1.0 to Archive 2.0

> […] involved the mechanization and later digitization of archival databases, with an aim of fast, easy and open access based on efficient and standardized dendritic classification and retrieval, associated also

[121] Giannachi quotes Thomas Richards (Richards 1993).

> with statistical analysis performed upon the data. Much of this took hold from the nineteenth century. The library catalogue and criminal records are familiar examples. Photography has been a key component. (Shanks and Svabo 2013, 98)

There are several interesting observations to make from this description of Archive 2.0. Firstly, it describes a development that is not over yet, where archives are becoming increasingly heterogeneous and where the need to retrieve and combine records from different archives has arisen. Secondly, Archive 2.0 involves technologies for the storage, retrieval and use of data that highlight the archive's own structural determination of the archivable event. In other words it becomes what Jacques Derrida in *Archive Fever* has called an "*archiving* archive" (Derrida 1995, 17):

> […] the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event. (Derrida 1995, 17)

It is not only the technical structure of archiving or the archival infrastructure that is at stake here. It is the archive as an apparatus in the sense drawn from Michel Foucault by Giorgio Agamben (Agamben 2009). Drawing on Agamben's reading Gabriella Giannichi describes the archival apparatus as

> […] a "heterogeneous set" including "virtually anything" under the same heading: "discourses, institutions, buildings, laws, police measures, philosophical propositions, and so on, precisely because the apparatus is the *network* [Giannichi's emphasis] that is established between these elements." (Giannachi 2016, xv)[122]

This meta-level of the apparatus is what Derrida addresses when stating that

> […] archival technology no longer determines, will never have determined, merely the moment of the conservational recording, but rather the very institution of the archivable event. (Derrida 1995, 18)[123]

It is also what Rebecca Schneider's analysis of the loss connected to the disappearance of performance seems emanate from. Namely the idea that the archive is so pervasive within Western governance, thought and identity that we are never really able to escape it.

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[122] Giannichi cites from (Agamben 2009, 1-2).

[123] This understanding of the archive as an apparatus also corresponds more or less to Boris Groys' analysis of the museum collection's determination of artistic imagination.

Thirdly, the observation that the criminal record becomes the prime example further points to Archive 2.0 as an apparatus of control and power within the frame of liberal governance that I sketched out in Chapter 3. The distinction between Archive 1.0 and Archive 2.0 thus also underlies the argument of philosopher Manuel DeLanda for whom the archive has historically had two different functions:

> […] a collection of ancient sacred texts will have different applications than a set of hospital or prison records. While the former tends to be used with a view toward the past (even if reinterpretations of the content of sacred archives do have an effect on present ritual practice) the latter tend to be utilized with future behavior in mind. (DeLanda 2003, 8)

DeLanda takes his clue from Michel Foucault's description of archives in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, in which Foucault pushes the distinction even further by stating that the archive record "is no longer a monument for future memory, but a document for possible use" (Foucault 1979, 191 quoted after DeLanda 2003, 9). DeLanda and Foucault are talking about the archiving of the individual, notably the archiving of delinquency – as an exterior objectification of the subject hitherto thought of in terms of "interiorized representations" (DeLanda 2003, 12) or a "subjective interiority" (DeLanda 2003, 11). Extending this argument the archive (and archival technology) becomes a disciplinary tool to map the everyday of the state's subjects – or stated in terms of biopolitics; an instrument to regulate appropriate behaviour, a social technology. Extending it even further yet it is also archival technology, the archiving of the individual and the everyday (e.g. the constant mapping and storing of our online behaviour) that makes the archive a powerful tool for corporate capitalism. Finally, it is significant for the transition of the archival tradition that photography became a key component and marked the shift from Archive 1.0 where direct inscription was the main operative mode of the archive, to Archive 2.0 where the storage and registration of documentation became a more prominent feature. Related to the situational artistic practices I have described, photography as well as video and sound recording, constitute central and persisting issues with relation to the representation of situations in the archive (Auslander 2006, Reason 2006).

In summation, Archive 2.0 must be seen in a genuinely Foucauldian sense as a social technology that structures the conventions of liberal society and produces the reality within which the subject is afforded the opportunity of identity formation and of a "counter-politics" (Gordon 1991, 5) or "the sometimes radical oppositional theme"

(Foucault 2008, 320) that I analysed in Chapter 3. It is this idea of the archive as an apparatus, both located and pervasive, retrospective and prospective, documenting and inscribing as well as descriptive and prescriptive, that the modern idea of the museum rests upon. Relating this idea of the archive to my analyses regarding sounding situations it can now be argued more forcefully that the archive overwrites and structures both phenomenological experience and deconstructive or hermeneutic interpretation at the same time as it enables and fosters Judith Butler's idea of disidentification by which the individual can fail "to repeat loyally" (Butler 2011, 167). Seen as such the general issues of representation, both on the level of the subject and of the artwork, seem to belong to Archive 1.0 and 2.0. Transferring this view more directly to the museum archive and its records of sounding situational practices teaches us at least two things. Firstly, that we as archivists bear the responsibility for the objectification of practices external to our own. And secondly, that these objectifications must be identified as "individuals not as members of a pre-existing category, but in all their uniqueness and singularity" (DeLanda 2003, 11). The latter point substantiates Morten Søndergaard's argument about the problems of the prevalent processes of acquisition for museum collections in relation to contemporary art (Søndergaard 2016, 185). When engaging with a situational practice we do not necessarily have pre-existing categories from which we may acquire the best specimens but rather we work in an experimental and intransitive field where we are constantly faced with the challenge of selecting and documenting disparate individual elements that may or may not be connected or of value to the future. More locally, from a museum curator's point of view, it is also evident that the structure and contents of any museum's (archiving) archive at present partly determines what will be considered for future acquisitions.

A lot of this changes with the advent of Archive 3.0 that we according to Shanks and Svabo are presently moving towards. Here, "new prosthetic architectures for the production and sharing of archival resources, for animating archives" (Shanks and Svabo 2013, 98) constitute a new archival paradigm in which

> […] new interfaces involve processes of recollection, regeneration, reworking, remixing in sophisticated visualizations and customized interactive and participatory designs. (Shanks and Svabo 2013, 98)

Archive 3.0 acts as an infrastructural meta-archive where data can be stored and retrieved in a complex network of databases and localities. With this sort of archive in

mind, and with its dispersion across platforms and institutions, it is clear that the authoritative role traditionally accorded to museum collections and archives is becoming less significant. It is equally clear that museums are faced by challenges related to their users, who, on a daily basis, navigate freely across many platforms that offer the above-mentioned processes and possibilities for participation. According to Gabriella Giannachi this sort of archive is "the network of strategies we use to map everything in both space *and* time" (Giannachi 2016, xxi), and at their present stage "archives, libraries, museums, the Internet, have become more and more interchangeable, forming part of a broader social memory apparatus" (Giannachi 2016, 25). Giannachi also notes how

> […] we have become increasingly obsessed with not only our presence in the archive but also with our ability to record that presence in the now and to fold it within the archive, so much that our everyday lives have started to be continuously integrated within the archive as part of what we call the digital economy. (Giannachi 2016, 25)

As a consequence of this development it becomes important to investigate the museum's role in the production of this reality and the opportunities for the museum archive to persist as a critical backdrop for this amalgam of economic, corporate and governmental interests. Michael Shanks and Connie Svabo suggest a mobile perspective on heritage connected to this archival situation:

> The central position accorded to the archive references what we see as major shifts in the heritage industry. Our emphasis upon architectures of engagement and processes of actualizing pasts-in-the-present is an argument for treating heritage, not as legacy or property, artefacts and sites to be valued and managed, but as, again, a dynamic process of incorporating pasts in presents and so involving, primarily, issues of the politics of assemblage, the way people gather around sites and things. (Shanks and Svabo 2013, 100)

While I agree with their statement, this chapter should have made it clear that the conditions under which art museums are able to work dynamically with heritage and archives from the perspective of sounding situations are, at the moment, insufficient and under-prioritised in both legislation and funding opportunities. This means that the archiving dimension of the museum is likely to become side-lined to an extent where museums might lose sight of their important role as public heritage institutions.

Curating the archive

A curatorial engagement with the archive under these conditions meet a number of challenges. Firstly, if the archiving of the self within the digital economy is becoming increasingly prevalent, this development more or less runs counter to the idea of the

museum archive as a curated space that can act to counterbalance corporate interests. It also questions the idea of artistic or curatorial antagonism that I identified as necessary for participation in Chapter 3. While museums should (and could) work more dynamically and openly with archives in order to actualise their contents in ways that are relevant for their users, they should also hold on to their responsibilities as public heritage institutions in the service of the population. These responsibilities include that the archive serves as semi-independent or critical of the expedient regime of culture. As media theorist Sean Cubitt has argued "the archive is not an aesthetic category but an ethical one, in that we owe some obligation to the past and the future to maintain objects in the present" (Cubitt 2017, 174). The idea of the archive as ethical is important because as Cubitt details, it is as much about remembering as it is about forgetting. The daily choices made by archivists and conservators on the basis of available means necessitates the

> […] damnable choice between items to be taken on for full restoration, while marking others down to the tender mercies of storage in the full knowledge that they will continue to decay. (Cubitt 2017, 178)

To Cubitt, "there can be no aesthetic that is not also ethical, and no politics that is not also aesthetic" (Cubitt 2017, 175). Archival choice and care are then essentially about canon-formation which is understood as an obligation to the future in the form of remembrance as well as a responsibility to the past in the form of a debt to that which is being forgotten or erased from cultural memory.

The dispersion of the archive poses another challenge for museums. If the meta-archival apparatus of 3.0. is becoming increasingly decentralised and networked then the traditional authoritative role accorded to the museum archive changes to a state where it becomes just one among many sources from which knowledge can be processed, actualised and produced. This emphasises the need for an ethics that is closely connected to the daily choices of working with the museum archive. It also stipulates the need for museum archives to be visible and accessible on a broader level if they want to play a significant role in the formation of cultural memory. In order to enable sounding situations and other temporal practices that are not readily accessioned for the museum collection as artworks (and hence documented in the museum archives) I argue that the category of *other* archival material must be prioritised in terms of access and exchange

with other archives. If it is only stored for potential future art historical interest it will not be able to interact with the meta-archive.

On a more optimistic note, conservator and art historian Hanna Hölling has suggested that

> […] divorcing the archive from its exclusive "pastness," one might conceive of the museum archive as a place where conservators and curators undertake the process of de- and re-activating artworks. (Hölling 2017, 143)

In her description Hölling relies mainly on Derridean and Foucauldian frameworks that suggest affinity with the model of Archive 2.0 in which the archive entails "both a conceptual and a material approach to the formation of cultural memory" and as such it is "a dynamic space of exchange and actualization" that "produces knowledge" (Hölling 2017, 142). Hölling observes how the museum archive is co-creative in the identity of artworks. As such she is mainly describing the museum's archival function as documenting and determining the identity of material artworks already held in the museum's custody – a conception much akin to the idea of documentation (as opposed to archival materials) that I described in the above with relation to the Danish guidelines for registration. However, in Hölling's conception of the museum archive it is itself already dispersed across a broad range of microarchives (Hölling 2017, 145) produced by the various departments and professions within the museum. Adding to that she notes that in the fragile context of media art information about artworks in the museum's holdings often has to sought in archives outside of the institution. Sometimes even in the form of tacit, embodied knowledge of practitioners from various fields. Archives are thus not only comprised of material records. On the contrary Hölling's practical experience with the reconstruction of the Nam June Paik installation *Arche Noah* leads her to suggest, with reference to Deleuze (Deleuze 1991), that the archive has both a real and a virtual dimension (Hölling 2017, 149). The real dimension comprises the material traces and records that the work has left in the physical archives whereas the virtual is implicit to the archive as that which is "neither expressed and demonstrated nor clearly classified" (Hölling 2017, 149):

> This implicit, virtual sphere of the archive is constituted by subject-oriented tacit knowledge (that is, knowledge of individuals) memory, nonembodied skills (including the relation between body and mind), competencies, and systems of knowledge; it concerns information

> that is not formulated in any written instruction. (Hölling 2017, 149)[124]

The idea of a virtual archive is interesting in connection to *Aggressive Listening* when thought of as an embodied, experimental and intransitive practice where, following Hölling's argument, the practitioners' tacit knowledge become part of this practice's archive. Because tacit knowledge "belongs to and characterizes those who possess it, it is impossible for the archive, on either its virtual or its physical level, to be conceptualized as a central body" (Hölling 2017, 152). With this conception of a personal and dispersed archive its status as an authoritative collection of records is undermined. While the real archive of *Aggressive Listening* contains documentation, text, and other tangible materials, its virtual archive is individually created and comprises experiences, environments, bodily and discursive knowledge derived empirically from the practice but not necessarily externalised in any other form *than* this practice. In this sense, Hölling's idea of tacit knowledge resembles Donna Haraway's notion of situated knowledges where knowing is always tied to the individual body and always in the plural (Haraway 1988). With the idea of the virtual archive the Derridean *archiving archive* also enters a new dimension where it is not only the authorised and official archives that determine the possible but rather the archive as a form of collective memory. This idea adds further emphasis to the above description of the archive of sounding situations as a grey zone. Acknowledging the importance of an archive like this where the lack of authority and institutional control is its inherent condition points to a different paradigm of knowledge production where, as Sven Spieker has argued,

> […] the archive and what it stores, emerge at the same time so that one cannot easily be subtracted from the other. In this archive, the objects stored and the principles that organize them are exempt neither from time nor from the presence of the spectator. Never quite selfsame, the archive oscillates between embodiment and disembodiment, composition and decomposition, organization and chaos. (Spieker 2008, xi)

[124] I suspect the word "nonembodied" in the above quote to be an error of correction to be replaced by embodied. Just below the quote, Hölling likens her account of the virtual archive and the tacit knowledge it implies with Diana Taylor's concepts of the archive and the repertoire (Taylor 2003) in which she states that her own "concept of the nonphysical archive and Taylor's repertoire of embodied cultural practices […] highlight the insufficiency of the physical archive alone. For Taylor, the repertoire enacts embodied memory and all sorts of ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge" (Hölling 2017, 149). In this connection a concept of nonembodied skills seems to be a mistake.

Knowledge production is cast as networked, reciprocal, contingent and dynamic in ways where the Foucauldian idea of archive as a disciplinary tool or a social technology may very well still apply, although its performative dimensions are now emphasised. The inherent grey zone here, which also highlights the ethics involved with curating the archive is that with its dispersion, the archive's underlying institutional and economic power structures have now become more decentralised and thus less visible. Hölling does warn that we should not let the ideas of the virtual archive and tacit knowledges become mystifying explanations: "The real aspects of tacit knowledge, such as skills and attitudes, should be distinguished from the mystifying ones" (Hölling 2017, 152). Therefore a careful documentation effort aimed at describing what we do when working the archive is necessary because the

> […] relation between the conservation narrative and the archive is reciprocal: the conservation narrative both draws from the archive, basing its content on archival traces and documents, and contributes to it, becomes part of it. (Hölling 2017, 153)

My last point in relation to Shanks and Svabo's promises of Archive 3.0 is that if resources are becoming scarce and museums as well as funding bodies have a higher need for visibility then questions of the ethics of heritage as well as those of the partly invisible, virtual archive will easily be forced to the background. One of the central points to be drawn from Hölling's account of the virtual archive is that it remains hidden until the need to actualise it arises and, if this need does not arise, it slowly withers and disappears. In the light of the economy of presentism, the crucial point for the sustenance of intangible sounding practices like *Aggressive Listening* and their virtual archives seems then not so much to be the physical museum archive itself (or the acquisition of objects for that archive) but rather the opportunity for artists to work within the vicinity of the archive in other formats such as projects, performances, festivals, interventions, learning etc. In this context to be within the vicinity of the physical archive would mean that activities carried out as part of collaborations with the museum inevitably will leave material traces to be accessed later and mapped onto the virtual archive. The sustenance of practices like *Aggressive Listening,* when understood through the lens of the situation *as* intangible heritage, seems to be a promising area in which to combine the museum's archival obligation with the tendency toward experience driven spectacle and visibility. However, it demands that the mechanisms, valuations and daily working routines are reoriented towards documenting not only artworks

in the museum collection but also events that take place at the museum that are not necessarily tied to the museum collection.

Earlier I posed the question whether the sustenance of intangible practices would potentially, in entirely other ways than collecting objects, reframe the discussion of cultural heritage. Seeing that art museums are increasingly entering into the flows of production and presentation instead of merely representing or being reflective of their outsides, a combined focus on tangible as well as intangible heritage is then needed. Giving more priority to the intangible dimensions of heritage would partly shift the priorities of the museum from collecting artefacts as its primary mode of safeguarding to sustaining the living communities in ways which would be well in accordance with the development described by Svabo and Shanks as Archive 3.0. As such it seems that museums are developing in ways that reflect deeper changes in of how we understand our society and its cultural institutions – changes which need a political refocusing of the conditions and motivations for prioritising the sustenance of intangible heritage.

7. Exhibiting Situations

The idea of the sounding situation does not only have bearing on the archive. Rather the situational intransitivity of the auditory that I have identified is equally and radically de- and recontextualized when addressed in the context of the exhibition. As we have seen in the previous chapters situations do not easily let themselves archive or otherwise represent because they are tied to certain architectures and certain cultural and discursive contexts. Within the problematic of the archive the composition seems to take on more significance, not only as an analytic tool but also as a structuring element for future potential exhibitory situations. However, the exhibition itself is also a new situation with its own structured and structuring properties in and by which sounding situations and compositions are affected, encoded and altered. As such there are a series of decontextualisations and recontextualisations going on once the situation crosses over into the exhibitory domain. It is not unique that meanings change whenever an iteration is uttered in a new context. That goes for just about anything. Concerning sound however the changes are quite radical. Both phenomenologically speaking as every site has its own unique acoustic signature as well as ideologically speaking because listening carries its own set of social and historical conventions and normative assumptions. Situations constantly become layered, embedded and intermingled within new situations. These are the assumptions that make up the for background for this chapter, which investigates how thinking about sound as situation might affect working with exhibitions at the art museum and conversely, how the institutional space of the museum gallery both condition and challenge understandings of artistic practice with sound that do not necessarily produce tangible or stable artworks.

Traditionally exhibitions have been theorised as the sites where the public meets art at the museum – or as the editors of the influential volume *Thinking About Exhibitions* from 1996 put it:

> Exhibitions have become the medium through which most art becomes known. […] Exhibitions are the primary site of exchange in the political economy of art, where signification is constructed, maintained and occasionally deconstructed. Part spectacle, part socio-historical event, part structuring device, exhibitions – especially exhibitions of contemporary art – establish and administer the cultural meanings of art. (Ferguson, Greenberg, and Nairne 1996, 2)

Building upon a similar apprehension of the importance of exhibitions for art's evaluation and circulation, curator and critic Simon Sheikh has noted that exhibitions are

always articulations in the sense that they form statements both about the art world as well as the world writ large. Consequently they form part of a certain imaginary or world view (Sheikh 2011, 19) that is expressed through any given exhibition. In this line of thought exhibitions are also discursive sites for the circulation and dissemination of art and as such they take the form of relatively autonomous units of composed meaning and coherence alone on the grounds of the artistic and curatorial choices of inclusion and exclusion involved in exhibition-making. This involves not only the artworks but all other adjacent material in the form of catalogues, audio guides, guided tours, wall texts and surrounding events etc., all of which only add emphasis to viewing the exhibition as a composed unit of meaning.

Exhibitions today can be almost anything. Concerning exhibitions which go beyond the museum space and work as processes of inquiry rather than illustrations of ideas, curator Hans Ulrich Obrist has spoken about

> […] dematerialised exhibitions; there are exhibitions that come to the home of the spectator […]. There are all kinds of possibilities, time-based, space-based, dematerialised… (Malzacher, Tupajic, and Zanki 2011, 46)

As curator and art historian Beatrice von Bismarck states, the exhibition has become "a transdisciplinary and transprofessional space of appearance" (von Bismarck 2011, 52). Inside and outside of the gallery space just about any activity or display that presents and/or represents a curatorial or artistic idea within the field of contemporary art can be and has been designated an exhibition. Despite this diversity of possibilities in contemporary exhibition-making my concern in this chapter is with the category of the exhibition as it unfolds within the narrower context of the museum gallery space including the possibilities and restraints offered by this context.

As I noted in chapter 3 art museums need to fill their exhibition spaces with what is widely acknowledged as artworks in order to comply with the expectations of their visitors and funders. Within the context of the gallery space it is, as Simon Sheikh notices, difficult to view an exhibition as an isolated theoretical object because it is already historically and ideologically ingrained and naturalised in the ways we tend to think about art and its presentation (Sheikh 2011, 18-19). In other words there are social and historical conventions that enable us to recognise exhibitions as exhibitions. Yet exhibitions within the museum gallery setting cannot easily sustain the inconclusiveness of project based work or the intransitivity of the sounding situation because they tend to

decontextualize these in order to give them a more stable and manageable rendition. Exhibitions themselves are thus preceded by processes of decontextualisation and the situations they exhibit tend to become recontextualized as discrete units of composed meaning and curatorial intent that together make up the composition and statement of the exhibition. Within this view an exhibition is a far more stable (however temporal) iteration of cultural meaning and of curatorial and artistic choice than the intransitive sounding situation as I have presented it so far can be.

The questions arising from this observation have been addressed extensively from perspectives of performance art, conceptual art and (new) media art among others. Related to performance art the French curator and critic Virginie Bobin's short text "Draft for a Performance Museum: A Guided Tour" (Bobin 2012) surveys a large number of the various approaches that have recently been taken by museums to represent performance in the exhibition space. Bobin questions the implied assumptions of adequately being able to represent performance art which underlie e.g. the reconstruction of events through mediatised documentation and the restaging of documentation-as-artwork or the staging of documentation items as auxiliaries to help understand the moment lost to time. This critique is also extended to participatory installations, reenactments and performance relics, the latter of which take on their own fetish-like and autonomous object character. Ultimately the empty white cube of the gallery space is criticised as a staging of the museum itself "both glorifying and pervading it by enhancing its self-referentiality" (Bobin 2012, 116). In relation to (new) media art Christiane Paul has posited questions related to the traditional enshrinement of art as objects within museums in the face of new networked, distributed and participatory art practices (Paul 2008, 2) that transgress such institutional borders in both time and space. She claims that new media art essentially puts new curatorial and exhibitory approaches in demand. In the context of my argument it is especially the networked, temporal, distributed (also often in terms of authorship) and participatory characteristics of much media art that calls attention to its situational character and its infrastructural composition. As Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook has noted, these and other similar characteristics have caused new media art and its curation to become "increasingly misaligned with the traditional institutions for the presentation of art" (Graham and Cook 2010, 84).

What is at stake then is a conflict or discrepancy between the situational artwork and the gallery space as art's traditional frame of presentation and representation. Just as

the artwork can be conceptualised as a situation, the exhibition space itself also constitutes a situation that symbolically enframes and gives political, historical and ideological meaning to its content. Putting records of sound into the exhibition space creates a layered situation where it is not only the specific sound and its original situation but also the historical and ideological aspects of the space of its presentation (and the order of the archive it was retrieved from) that become co-productive of sensation, meaning, and knowledge production. That is how I understand the exhibition to be an institutionally conditioned representational space. I hinted at this earlier (see page 94) by evoking the notion of the exhibit as a juridical term and the gallery as a space where the material records or evidence and traces of past actions may be displayed. Each exhibition space presents listeners, artists and curators not only with a unique phenomenological situation but also an institutional structure that, as we shall see in the following, inflicts its own conventions and ideologies upon the situation presented and so co-produces a new situation. Following from this, situations are always nested within other situations that affect how we might experience them. As an ideologically and historically structured and structuring space the exhibition itself is a messy amalgam of situations where, from the points of views of artistic and curatorial practice, the layers of representation and the continuum of decontextualisation and recontextualisation need to be carefully addressed.

A question about paint

In order to qualify the idea of the situational in relation to the exhibition as an ideological and enculturated symbolic space, I would like to return to the project of *WGSEF* that I addressed in Chapter 4. As I mentioned there, one of my goals with the project was to examine the borders and transitions between participatory project and exhibition from the perspective of sound and listening. Following that ambition, the aim with the exhibition was to present it as a continuation and extension of the activities carried out by the *WGSEF*. However, my somewhat tongue-in-cheek claim that exhibitions show the material records of past actions prompts questions of how sound addresses the relation between past, present and future in the context of the gallery space. The exhibition itself is already related to the nexus of past, present and future, which I also described as deeply embedded within the project work's situational character. The tensions identified between participation and artwork from the perspective of the museum

as a cultural institution in the expedient regime of culture in a sense extend themselves once we shift focus toward the representational problems of exhibiting.

As mentioned, the three-month collaboration with Kabir Carter on the *WGSEF* project was concluded with an exhibition in Husarstalden at the MFSK. We aimed to convert and distil the participatory project work and activities into an exhibition format. Ideally our goal was to present it as a continuation of the workshops and other project activities that would extend the openness and exploratory modality of these to the visitor's engagement with the installation in the gallery space. An important part of my initial research questions and reasons for engaging with Carter had been a desire to examine the relations between social, interpersonal and participatory listening situations and the ways these might feed into more static exhibitory contexts. And vice versa, how knowledge about such exhibitory contexts would affect performances of listening. As an attempt to examine the relation between project and exhibition, we ideally wanted to let all the activities carried out in the *WGSEF* feed into to the exhibition that was planned at the end of our period of collaboration. Equally, we had also worked from the assumption that the participatory elements in the project, especially the workshops, would ideally be reflected and presented as a collaborative effort where project participants would contribute to the exhibition:

> Working Group participants will help generate a record of completed activities that will be exhibited at the Museet for Samtidskunst. The scale and nature of exhibited work and materials will be developed during and through all Working Group events. (Press release, issued February 5, 2015)

However, this turned out to be perhaps too ambitious. We failed to generate sustained investment and participation from people interested in the exhibitory element of the project.[125] As a consequence Carter and I more or less had to generate the exhibition

[125] In hindsight it may be argued that our strategy of dispersing activities over a large number of localities in order to attract a diverse group of participants may have backlashed and actually excluded possible participants due to the social codification of institutions such as the art academy, the experimental music venue, the university or the museum. When assessing the involvement of the different participants in the project it is evident that these institutional boundaries were highly influential in terms of inclusion and exclusion and that there were very few occasions where participants would cross over from their habitual institutional affiliation to another. The art students remained at the academy, the university students (save two. Thank you, Mei and Pernille!) showed at events held at the university and the events held at Mayhem primarily attracted people who could be considered part of that venue's core audience. Only the workshops held on "neutral" or "foreign" ground outside of these art world associated institutions,

from our own interpretations of the project and not as the collaborative effort we had aimed for. The fact that we were left with the artistic and curatorial choices ourselves pointed out very clearly the opposition between the dispersed contingency and dialogical open-endedness in project-based work on the one hand, and the finality of decisions needed in exhibition-making on the other hand. It also revealed to us that exhibiting a project like this (and possibly exhibiting per se) always involves questions of *re*presentation alongside those of *pre*sentation. Whether we wanted it or not the conventions of the exhibition medium made it very clear to us that curatorial and artistic choices were needed perhaps more than in the preceding project based work. The project had to be presented and represented at the same time whereas the representational element had been less prominent in our previous collaboration. The resulting exhibition became in many ways a Kabir Carter installation curated by me as opposed to the collaborative effort that we had aimed for – a situation that very literally underlined the authorly condition (both artistic and curatorial) inherent to any form of exhibition-making. Staging participation as the renunciation of curatorial or artistic authorship is, as we also saw in Chapter 3, not a sustainable solution or a simple question of either/or when engaging with exhibitory contexts. As the reader might recall, it is rather the insertion of antagonism (in the form of artistic or curatorial content or statement) that may very well be what motivates participation and what gives rise to active involvement.

When planning the instalment of the exhibition Carter and I had a discussion concerning the way the room looked and how this room would present the project to potential visitors. The Husarstalden gallery at the MFSK is a former stable building dating, like the rest of the museum, from the early 18th century. It lies across the courtyard from the main exhibition spaces of the museum and is mostly used for storage, and only occasionally houses exhibitions and other public activities. The room itself has a worn concrete floor in uneven grey gradients and white, equally uneven, walls made with half-timbering. The paint on the walls is old and in some places, especially on the timber beams, it has begun to flake. The room is approximately 7x8 meters in a slightly rhombic shape with about 3,5 meters to the white plaster ceiling that has four electrical sockets from which there normally are four lamps suspended. There are two windows, one just left of the glass double entrance door and the other on the wall opposite from the

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such as The Technical University or the bat listening workshop in Kongens Lyngby, attracted more diverse groups of participants.

entrance. These windows were blinded with white semi-translucent cloth for the exhibition. On the right there is a door blocked by chipboard behind which there is an adjacent storage room. Visually it is a rather rough space that somehow awkwardly mimics a classic modernist white cube whilst simultaneously certainly not being one. It is very clear that this is a former stable that has been adopted for occasional exhibitionary means – a kind of project room for the museum where things that do not necessarily connect to the main exhibition programme can be shown.

Carter suggested that it should be repainted in order to

> […] alter the exhibition space to better accommodate sound without visual distraction—to clearly transfer the reified aesthetics of the white cube to sound in space. (Kabir Carter, email correspondence, September 6, 2015)

I did not quite understand his argument on the grounds that we, as clarified in Chapter 4, had worked very site-specifically during the course of the project's workshops. In these, architecture and found materials had been utilised in order to investigate the relations between body and space via sound. This concrete phenomenological site-specific approach meant that we had addressed the physical environments within which we had been working mainly on a sensate non-discursive level. For the instalment of the exhibition I now felt that this idea of site-specificity would be misrepresented were we to shift it towards a more conceptual and institutional site-specificity that had more to do with the conventions of the white cube than with representing the records, methods and results of the Working Group activities. Given the level of attention we had given to phenomenological site-specificity during the workshops, I found it to be an imposition of a certain set of aesthetic and institutional preferences onto the representation of the project in the exhibition setting.

This simple and very concrete conflict of interest about white paint expresses a lot of the tensions that underlie more basic discussions of sound in the gallery space and the representation of situations through exhibitions. Let alone the transformation of this concrete project's intransitive mode of exploration into a more stable and controllable exhibitory environment. First of all, the insertion of the stable room into the project complicates Miwon Kwon's triple notions of site-specificity discussed in Chapter 4 (see page 100) because it adds the layers of the institutional and the discursive sites very clearly onto the phenomenological site. Thus it points to one of Kwon's main argu-

ments, that these cannot be seen as separate levels or phases but are in fact all immediately present in every situation. To engage in a sonic situation is not solely a matter of listening or immersing oneself in sound but rather to take the situation in all its (dispersed and complex) entirety into consideration. During the project period we had not addressed this broader cultural and social problematic explicitly. Perhaps because we had chosen to work in multiple locations and outside a traditional museum setting. However, in this new phase it became very obvious how we had treated sound and sonic exploration primarily from a phenomenological perspective during the workshops.[126] Inserting the shabby make-up of the stable room and its clumsy reference to the white cube into our collaboration made it very clear that there was a distinct difference between how the project had dealt with phenomenological space compared to institutional or discursive space. The visual appearance of the gallery space now became an institutional and discursive site to negotiate, and the stable room thus became *a* gallery and as such a general representative of a set of discussions about the conventions of the white cube. In prolongation of my critiques of theoretical approaches to so-called sound art and its implicated concepts of the artwork in the Chapter 4, this new situation then highlights how the context of presentation and audition is a decisive factor when engaging with sounding artworks. In this engagement institutional, discursive and phenomenological sites intermingle and form a complex meshwork where neither discursive or phenomenological approaches alone quite cut the deal to account comprehensively for the situation presented. Progressing from the notion of the situation it follows that all levels and modalities of sites as well as the situations they engender and produce must be taken into account. It is not enough to only give priority to a phenomenological approach to listening, to conceptual readings or to the nature of sonic matter at the level of the singular artwork in question. Thus, the main questions to be explored in the following are how artistic practice with sound and the white cube converge and disjoin, and which considerations are important in dealing with the notion of sounding situations in the context of the exhibition space.

[126] The project work did have discursive elements such as the launch event and the reading group. However, the main bulk of activities were carried out as phenomenological explorations of sound in various spaces and contexts.

The white cube situation

The white cube has been famously theorised by artist and critic Brian O'Doherty in his series of essays in Artforum from 1976 collected in the volume *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (O'Doherty 1976). He analyses how the white cube of the gallery space is saturated by culture and ideology much contrary to common belief held at his time and how

> […] for better or worse it is the single major convention through which art is passed. What keeps it stable is the lack of alternatives. […] The gallery space is all we've got, and most art needs it. (O'Doherty 1976, 80-81)

Even if this may seem anachronistic in the light of contemporary dispersed art and exhibition practices, and even if O'Doherty's essays are primarily aimed at analysing commercial New York galleries in the 1970s, there is a certain actuality to his argument in my context given the fact that most museums have to some extent adopted some version of the white cube as their primary space of exchange with their audiences. As we saw in Chapter 3, art museums have rooms they need to fill (with art) in order to attract people. And museums too form an important part of the art world economy – even if they do not make their profits from actually selling artworks. This is perhaps even more applicable today as museums are increasingly entering the flows of production and thus rendering unstable the previous models of the museum as an institution that primarily preserved and reflected its outside.

In his essays O'Doherty establishes the white space of the art gallery as a "placeless" (O'Doherty 1976, 27) room that resonates with its outside through a certain form of negation. By shutting out context and worldly profanity from art in the period leading up to the 1960s the white gallery space by implication came to point to its own status in this worldly context. Accordingly, in the 1960s and 1970s the context of the gallery itself became the very content for much art where "[w]hen isolated, the context of objects is the gallery" (O'Doherty 1976, 45). Artworks are thus dissociated from real life and once they enter the gallery they become historical and referent of all other artworks that have previously been shown in galleries writ large. Artworks are taken out of vernacular time in order to enter "a kind of eternity of display" and – likewise – the subject "has to have died already to be there" (O'Doherty 1976, 15). The gallery thus enacts a framing of the artwork and performs a reduction of the subject. Even when art moves off the walls and into the gallery space itself, as with the environments, happenings or

minimalism of the 1960s or becomes conceptually founded as in the 1970s, O'Doherty speaks of a disembodied eye that contextualises and interprets in an intellectual manner. This eye is countered by the figure of an embodied spectator who becomes confused, bewildered and alienated, and feels the sense of his own body's presence in space more clearly because it is being disrupted by the objects or actions installed in that space. O'Doherty does admit that there is a certain interaction going on between the two. However, it is central that the eye and the spectator are figures that are aware of the context they are in and therefore cut off from their phenomenological lifeworld. The white cube enacts a reduction. Apart from anticipating, on a different ground, the opposition of deconstruction with phenomenology as predominant tropes within discussions of sound art I addressed in Chapter 4, O'Doherty's view of the subject is itself rooted firmly within modernism's conception of art's relative autonomy. Even if his outlook is predominantly American and his observations on the subject may seem a little crude at historical distance, especially since much contemporary art has in fact moved out of the gallery and directly into the social fabric of the everyday, I would claim that the doorstep of the gallery still constitutes a threshold for subjectivity as well as for artworks in spite of however increasingly permeable the borders are becoming. As Elena Filipovic has remarked in the context of contemporary large-scale exhibitions that rely on "traditional museum exhibition formats", this reliance

> […] is questionable for numerous reasons, including, […] the fact that many contemporary aesthetic practices no longer correspond to the conditions for which the white cube was built. (Filipovic 2014, 48)

This echoes the remark from artistic director of Documenta X in 2002 Catherine David that

> […] the object for which the white cube was constructed is now in many cases no more than one of the aspects or moments of the work, or better yet, merely the support and the vector of highly diverse artistic activities. (Catherine David, quoted after Filipovic 2014, 53)

In O'Doherty's analyses it is evident that the critique of the white cube is rooted in the visual arts and accordingly that the gallery is primarily understood as a space that regulates spectatorship. As architect and curator Mark Wigley pointed out in a lecture given at Louisiana Museum of Modern art in 2015, the white cube is actually

> […] not a white cube. The walls are white, the floor is wood, the ceiling is dark. It is the vertical that is the clue, which places the work for the horizontal gaze. (Wigley 2015)

This lends emphasis to the visual and spatial metaphors developed by O'Doherty's as well as it emphasises and makes clear the implicated distance to be negotiated between the perceiver and the perceived.

In the case of the instalment of the *WGSEF* in the stable gallery it is clear that the critiques raised by Filipovic and David applied to our situation and our considerations on the room's visual appearance. The white cube was not necessary for Carter's overall project and was only inserted into our collaboration because of my research interests, and because the stable room was the space we had been offered by the museum to work in. However, if the white cube is rendered a "placeless" space as O'Doherty stated and still today constitutes the default and "favored modus operandi for exhibition-making – as the dominant model for the showing of art" (Sheikh 2009) then the specifics of this concrete room would seemingly matter less. However, that is not the case if we approach it from a strictly auditory perspective. Looking at the threshold between perceiver and perceived from the perspective of sound constitutes a different kind of encounter – even if it is also partly informed and encoded by the conventions of visual art. As Mark Wigley has rightly stated,

> […] you don't need a white wall for the white wall to do its work. […] Even if you paint a museum wall black, it is a white wall that has been painted black. (Wigley 2015)

This speaks to the pervasiveness of the institutional and discursive trope of the white cube. Thus in prolongation of Carter's suggestion to paint the room it can be argued that the imperfection of the stable as a white cube actually emphasised its institutional context by negation.

While I agree with curator Caleb Kelly that practical issues of the white cube in relation to sound have been a point of discussion for curators and artists since the late 1960s (Kelly 2017, 20), it is also clear that the interrelated conceptual and institutional underpinnings of this relationship have been far less addressed in the literature on so-called sound art. It is clear from a strictly phenomenological point of view that sound acts and is experienced differently compared to visual objects – both inside and outside of the gallery. Sound is invisible and does not care much for horizontality or overhead lighting. Rather it penetrates space and surrounds the listener – and by space I do not only mean that which can be seen but also the hidden structures behind the surfaces of the visual. Sound is literally both absorbed by and bounced off surfaces and it vibrates

through architectural, skeletal, fluid and otherwise opaque materials as well as it is being reflected and changed by the presence and movement of other human and non-human bodies. It unfolds in time, which means that it can never be taken in all at once by a quick glance. This tension between the auditory and the visual was inherent to Carter's argument about re-painting the walls in which he argued that the visual conventions of the gallery space would obstruct the proper auditory experience of the installation because the room would draw attention to itself for *not* being a perfect white cube. Extending this argument a perfect white cube with a minimum of visual distraction would have enabled visitors to become more intensely immersed in their exploration of the sonic properties of the room and their bodily movement within the room. Our conflict of interest over paint was not only about the conventions of visual art or about the conversion of different notions of site-specificity from workshop situations into exhibition situation. It was also about fundamental approaches to the significance of listening as a form of enculturated knowledge production as well as it highlighted the conflict between the phenomenal and the discursive at the heart of much sound art theory.

While I do not wish to revoke the simplified dichotomies of the audiovisual litany (Sterne 2003), it is my contention that auditory and visual elements of an exhibition act differently and are perceived differently. To a certain extent listening is immersive because it is omnidirectional – you can actually hear what is outside your visual field – and in many cases also what goes on outside the gallery. Contrarily, but only to a certain extent, visual perception *is* defined by limits and predicated upon distance and the separation of perceiver and the perceived. It is safe to say that sonic distance means something else compared to visual distance. These rather commonplace observations question what it means for the auditory to be boxed into the otherwise predominantly visually constructed white cube. And conversely, these observations question how sound and listening can affect the experience, discursive construction, and larger social and institutional fabric of this space and its contents.

From a strictly phenomenological point of view related to the auditory experience of room acoustics it is difficult to agree with O'Doherty that the white cube is a generalised and placeless space. The hard surfaces of the stable room at MFSK creates a rather reverberant space that, due to the uneven angles of its rhombic shape in combination with the different surface materials, has rather unpredictable resonance patterns. The

surface materials, the irregularities and unevenness, the windowsills, and other protrusions create an acoustic situation that is hard, 'lively', and reverberant with a high level of differing interferences and a relatively high signal-to-noise ratio. Especially in the high spectrum of audible frequencies. As the installation came to exemplify this particular room offers a complex acoustic environment where very detailed interference patterns offer a plethora of micro-differences in listening. Like any room it responds differently to different sounds and the listening experience is thus determined by the interplay between room acoustics, the concrete sounds in the room and the listening body's placement and movement in space relative to the sound sources' position and amplitude. This phenomenological sense of located place is to a greater or lesser extent of explicitness applicable to any white cube. And as such it formed the basis for the composition of sounds that ended up in the *WGSEF* installation.

During the workshops we had worked in an exploratory way, predominantly with moveable speakers and software to alter the sounds that were played back into the room. Yet as already stated, the exhibitory situation called for a far more stable and controlled sonic environment than the workshops because visitors would not be able to alter the projected sounds or the speaker placement. So to create the desired auditory effects within the acoustic properties of this specific room it was necessary to insert a level of composition that had previously been absent in the project. Accordingly Carter worked experimentally in the gallery within the instalment period in order to compose these sounds relative to the placement of the speakers and to the room acoustics in a way that would both represent and incite the exploratory mode of bodily inquiry from the workshops. The sounds that ended up being played back were both derived directly from the workshops, in the form of recorded bat calls, and more indirectly in the form of low frequency interference tones, white noise band sweeps, warble sounds in different frequency registers and other digitally created sounds that were all specifically composed for and attuned to the room acoustics and speaker placement within the room. This meant that the exact amplitudes, frequency ranges and location of speakers all became decisive for the variegated listening experiences the room had to offer. For the exhibition we ended up installing four Genelec 3080 speakers in a square formation hanging in mounts from the ceiling, each speaker projecting sound slightly downward and into the corners of the room. To the left when entering the room there was a slab of brown 1200x800 mm cardboard sheets that corresponded with a slab white A3 sized paper

opposite of the entrance on which a set of instructions or propositions for choreographing the listening experience within the installation was written.[127] Each of the speakers were connected to an mp3 player that played sound files in a loop. The four loops were of differing duration and constructed from individual sound files that also had different durations. There were also 'silent' sound files inserted into these loops so that all four speakers would not always project sound simultaneously. The sound files had different durations and each sound file would last some seconds or minutes and then change to the next one in the loop. Each loop consisted of 10-12 different files. Different bits of sound material were reused in the different loops in a way where the same or very similar sounds would sometimes appear at the same time from more than one speaker.

Structurally the overall composition of sounds acted more or less like an indeterminate mobile where certain sounds would appear and reappear at irregular intervals but always in new combinations or spatial configurations. If spending enough time in the room, visitors would experience periods with silence or near silence as well as periods with an intense and rather noisy soundscape. On the one hand the sounds in the installation thus represented some of the sonic materials and methods that had been used in the workshops. On the other hand the sounds afforded the visitors the opportunity to explore the acoustics of and their bodily interaction with the room in a similar way to what we had been doing in the workshops. As such the individual sounds and the overall composition formed Carters response to and representation of the project at the same time as it presented visitors with the opportunity to explore the acoustic properties of the installation themselves in a manner similar to the workshops. The installation thus also showed a high level of sonic site-specificity on a phenomenological level. Only now it was enframed or encapsulated within the discursive and institutional site-specificity of the white cube. In this sense it was a de- and recontextualisation of the project with added (or enhanced) layers of representation. With this in mind I would like now to move from the practical concerns regarding sound in space to theoretical considerations of how the notion of immersion implied by the installation as well as by the image of the perfect white cube both seem to underpin the forms of listening developed and afforded by the installation as well as by theories of so-called sound art.

127 For the set of propositions, see appendix 2.

Immersion and the audiovisual litany

To sum up my description, the stable's visual appearance referenced a white cube while simultaneously pointing explicitly to itself as a sort of representation of the white cube because of its shabby imperfection. However, on an auditory level its shape, the unevenness of its surfaces, the different, predominantly hard, surface materials (concrete, brick, wood, plaster, chipboard, glass) created a rather unique acoustic situation. That is to say at a strictly auditory and phenomenological level no white cubes are alike even if they may look the same, and even if they have institutional and discursive baggage that lumps them together into a convenient, placeless instantiation of *the* white cube. On the contrary, as any other space, this one too produced a highly specific listening situation due to its acoustic properties and environment. As a site for the bodily exploration of sound this particular white cube made up a space that could be investigated by its unique acoustic properties and thus not only function as a representation of a dominant trope within the visual arts. However, by visually miming a minimalist aesthetic somewhat reminiscent of for instance Carl Andre or Robert Morris' installations of slabs (wooden, brick, or other materials), the preoccupation with the phenomenal perception of body in space that was central to the minimalism of the mid-1960s, was emphasised and encouraged in the *WGSEF* installation. The visual layout of the room directly referenced a period in art history where the white cube as a space for art appreciation for the first time began to be called into question – roughly corresponding to the moment in O'Doherty's account where the spectator gains priority over the eye. In that respect the visual first-impression of the room worked very clearly as a reference to the sort of proto-minimalism that has been widely received as an investigation of the viewer's bodily presence in space – and as such visitors to the installation were given basic visual clues concerning their expected behaviour and concomitant "adequate mode of listening" (Stockfelt 1997). This points to Caleb Kelly's timely argument in his recent book *Gallery Sound*:

> Sound is formed within the gallery, within ideologies of art practices and within the bounds of social pressures, and sound is framed by expectations and social norms when it enters the art institution. (Kelly 2017, 18)

Following this line of argument, the appearance, history and ideology of the generalised gallery space obviously determines and works as a frame for the performances of listening that are afforded within this space regardless of its concrete appearance, acoustic

properties and exhibited contents. Any idea of a perceptual or material boundary between the sonic and the visual then becomes porous and permeable as does the idea of a listening that is not affected by the visual appearance of the environment within which it takes place. On the contrary the installation's mimetic relationship to minimalism and the fact that it was installed in a more or less square room with (semi-)white walls in a museum building are all significant for the experience as well as for the knowledge production afforded. It was not only a matter of sonic exploration and experimentation but rather a complex mix of institutional, discursive and phenomenological concerns working on both auditory, visual and conceptual backgrounds and premises. Bringing sound into this institutional situation and attempting to draw attention away from the visual appearance of the room by adhering to the conventions of visual art, in fact only constitutes another form of reduction that sets in once we pass the threshold to the gallery. Following Simon Sheikh's reading of O'Doherty it is clear that

> […] the gallery space is not a neutral container, but a historical construct. Furthermore, it is an aesthetic object in and of itself. The ideal form of the white cube that modernism developed for the gallery space is inseparable from the artworks exhibited inside it. Indeed, the white cube not only conditions, but also overpowers the artworks themselves in its shift from placing content within a context to making the context itself the content. However, this emergence of context is enabled primarily through its attempted disappearance. The white cube is conceived as a place free of context, where time and social space are thought to be excluded from the experience of artworks. It is only through the apparent neutrality of appearing outside of daily life and politics that the works within the white cube can appear to be self-contained—only by being freed from historical time can they attain their aura of timelessness. (Sheikh 2009)

The points that Sheikh are making about context becoming content and the apparent neutrality of the white cube can be stretched beyond the visual field. As art historian Theis Vallø Madsen has remarked, the idea of art as independent from reality subsists even though the concept of autonomy has become frayed around the edges and even if museums have partly departed from the idea. Vallø Madsen sees the characteristics of the white cube in our imaginaries about cyberspace: "Just as the noisy, surrounding reality is entering the museum gallery the imaginary of the pure white cube converts into an image of virtual space" (Madsen 2015, 180, my translation). In prolongation of my above descriptions such imaginaries of purity are also present in a number of approaches to listening within so-called sound art and its related discourse. One need only to think of the works, writings, and concerts of Francisco Lopez where audiences are

literally blindfolded (Lopez 2004); the significance and mythical afterlife of John Cage's famous experience in the anechoic chamber where, in this acoustically silenced room, he heard nothing but himself and thus effectively eliminated any outside in favour of an inward journey into listening (Cage 2004, Nyman 1999). Or in Pierre Schaeffer's ideas of reduced listening (Kane 2014) and their extension into the darkness of Salomé Voegelin's listening (Voegelin 2010, Voegelin 2014a) that I addressed in chapter 4. These examples show the deep roots of sound art (and its related discourse's) preoccupations with listening as a way to shut out the worldly profanity.

Relatedly, Jonathan Sterne has suggested that the equation between hearing and listening within the audiovisual litany should also be critiqued. To him listening "is a directed, learned activity. It is a definite cultural practice. Listening requires hearing but is not simply reducible to hearing" (Sterne 2003, 19). What follows from this is that there

> […] is no "mere" or innocent description of interior auditory experience. The attempt to describe sound or the act of hearing in itself – as if the sonic dimension of human life inhabited a space prior to or outside history – strives for false transcendence. (Sterne 2003, 19)

Extending Sterne's analyses it might then be argued that the learned modes of reduced listening that are provided and promoted equally by phenomenological reductionism and the white cube are in fact also social technologies of the gallery space, the museum and the institution of (sound) art history and theory. As such they act to enculturate and discipline the visitor into certain patterns of listening behaviour. In prolongation of such processes of enculturation, listening in the context of so-called sound art becomes itself a conceptual, institutionalised and placeless white cube on a metaphoric level. By making sharp distinctions between hearing and seeing, sound art theory might very well suffer a conceptual deficit that in turn neglects institutional and conceptual concerns in favour of phenomenal ones. Once we enter a situation clearly signalled as sound art in a museum gallery,[128] perhaps even with propositions to listen in certain scripted ways, we tend to reduce the distracting clues of the visual and of auditory elements that do not emanate from the work in front of us. When listening itself is emphasised as the very content of the experience, the shutting out of visual and conceptual distraction from this experience supposedly constructs a reduced and placeless space within which

[128] In the concrete case of the *WGSEF* this signalling was furthermore emphasised by the name of the project with its heavy reference to the canonical text of Rosalind Krauss (Krauss 1979).

a ‘pure’ listening is made possible. Listening as such is turned into a highly institutionalised mode of phenomenological enquiry that comes to function as yet another reduction, as a conceptual white cube within the physical white cube.

This observation resonates with Mark Wigley’s statement that the actual phenomenological appearance of the white cube is of little importance in immersive art installations because it has become implicit to the situation. It also underlines the view that immersive installations tend to promote “a kind of fantasy of unmediated experience” (Wigley 2015) that is always experienced relative to the white wall of the gallery. The nature of this relation according to Wigley, is that

> […] immersive exhibitions always try to make a discursive point. You are supposed to come back to the outside with a new sense of your position in the world. (Wigley 2015)

Following his analysis, the promises predicated upon the differences between the sonic and the visual expressed within the audiovisual litany to make listening an especially privileged mode of critical address and inquiry seem quite hollow. Sound is more or less in the same situation as the visual arts when entering the gallery space – and the special and concentrated focus on immersion and listening that was supposed to emancipate the listener from this situation actually only reinforces it. Arguments for listening’s subversive potential founded on its marginal relation to the cultural status of the gaze such as those pursued by Salomé Voegelin seem equally strangely contradictory in this situation.

In prolongation of these observations it is also evident that the far more authored and controlled situation of the gallery installation, compared to the intransitivity of the workshops within the *WGSEF* project, clearly came to point out and make apparent how the institutionalisation of listening within sound art situations is a crucial issue to contend with. The ideal of immersive listening, in part accommodated by the whiteness and inconspicuous appearance of the cube and in part conditioned by the history and theory of sound art, is culturally conditioned through and through on a general level. The white cube and its history sets the scene for what is appropriate and wanted behaviour and what might be transgressive. If this is taken to be correct it follows that the relation between concrete audible matter and its surroundings extends both into the past as a cultural habitus and history of listening (practices), and into the future as a projected idealism and criticality in the face of whatever present situation the listening

takes place within. As such, listening is never alone as an activity that can be isolated from its contexts.

Intellection and the audiovisual litany

As I have argued, my suspicions toward the phenomenologies that emanate from the audiovisual litany and are pervasive in sound art discourse, are enormous. Yet as I showed in Chapter 4, I also find the deconstructive criticisms that reduce sonic arts practice to a branch of conceptual art to be insufficient. For better or worse I am interested in listening as a generative process of meaning-making – yet I am not blind to the limitations and incapacities of listening. Rather, the position I am trying to establish takes as its premise that engagement with sounding situations encompasses both listening *and* theorising. In Chapter 4 I went through great pains to reject Seth Kim-Cohen's deconstructive reading of sound art as a non-cochlear and conceptual practice proposed in his first book *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art* (Kim-Cohen 2009). My reasons for doing so were mainly directed against the idea that the sonic artwork could seemingly form a closed statement or unit that could be accessed and analysed discursively - more or less independent of its audition. In his more recent book, *Against Ambience and other Essays* (Kim-Cohen 2016), parts of Kim-Cohen's critique have matured considerably. In this book his basic point is still a critique of the power of the audiovisual litany in sound art discourse. In his view such discourse places too heavy focus on immersive listening (or ambience which is the term he specifically critiques) as a quality of much sound art, rather than viewing it as a primarily conceptual practice that addresses the political and social reality of its surroundings. Even if the kind of criticism he employs is directed mainly at artworks he also raises the stakes in this book to include their exhibitory contexts in the development of his arguments.

In the beginning of the book's main essay he introduces a tripartite set of terms, methodologies or values: percept, concept and precept (Kim-Cohen 2016, 9) to describe different approaches to the analysis of sound or sonic situations:

> **Percepts** are objects of perception. I use the term bluntly, but not in an attempt to suggest a lack of sophistication regarding that status of such objects or of perception. For our purposes, this points to artworks concerned primarily with sensory phenomena and their apprehension via the organs of perception.

> **Concepts** are abstract ideas that create connections between objects or other concepts. I use the term as an allusion to capital C conceptualism in visual art, without mapping, 1:1, to that category. I will insist on small c conceptualism, plural.
>
> **Precepts** are general rules that regulate behavior or thought. I take it for granted that all behaviors ascribe to precepts. (Kim-Cohen 2016, 9)

Concepts in this sense are not formally in the artwork but rather defined as something "to which the work ascribes or aspires; an organizing principle, a process of composition, an attitude toward precedents and premises" (Kim-Cohen 2016, 15). Of course, Kim-Cohen does not revert to a phenomenological attitude towards listening but he does note that percepts and concepts depend on each other within the wider field of conceptualism in which he situates himself. In a passage about the conceptual practice of curator Seth Siegelaub, he states that Siegelaub's

> […] great contribution was to shepherd to pasture the fledging notion of supplemental materials of an art exhibition, things like catalogues and textual descriptions, are not outside the work, but in fact, integral to the work as a construct. Sometimes a Siegelaub exhibition would consist of nothing but supplements – just a catalogue, merely a plan, simply a project description. The lack of a recognizable art object confirmed that concepts and percepts are mutually dependent. (Kim-Cohen 2016, 14-15)

Not only are percepts and concepts intertwined they are also conditioned by precepts, which "may not be consciously known, suspended, as they are, in the muddled solutions of psychology, history, cultural conditioning, social identity, economic and political demands (Kim-Cohen 2016, 14). That percepts, concepts and precepts are intertwined in this way points directly to the notion of the exhibition-as-situation that I have argued for in this chapter. While in the project period the *WGSEF* focused mainly on a bodily expanded form of immersive listening, the installation became another form of situation where the underlying (cultural, social etc.) concepts of both listening and the exhibition space became very clear as elements that prescribed a certain set of behaviours. As such, any exhibition situation is embedded in a set of social technologies that need to be acknowledged and negotiated instead of ignored. Or put otherwise: once situated in the exhibition space this space becomes one of the concepts and precepts that artworks necessarily create connections with, and as such the space becomes co-productive of the situation. In the context of the *WGSEF* it follows from this that the exhibition element of the project was a radical de- and recontextualisation of the workshop elements that directly affected how meanings could be constructed and generated.

Kim-Cohen's model is good in order to describe how the exhibition situation is socially and institutionally conditioned. However, its emphasis on the conceptual and prescriptive elements still fails to adequately address the perceptive elements and listening as a distinct form of knowledge production. Regarding the division between raw sense experience and intellection (which is implicit to the audiovisual litany), the vocabulary that connects terms such as reflection, speculation, perspective and signification with rational critical thought signals that the use of ocular metaphors is related to situations in which distance and spatiality are assumed as preconditions of knowledge and understanding. On the other hand, in the discourse on sound and so-called sound art, terms such as engulfing, boundless, immersive, ephemeral are often used to mark sound as that which, as Brandon LaBelle claims, "seemingly eludes definition" (LaBelle 2006, ix) and often leaves the listener in ineffable sensory experience and/or in a state of transcendental intersubjective sublimation. Within the approaches to listening that can be described under the figure of the audiovisual litany, subject and object tend to get confused, blurred or intermingled in the immersive and temporal experience of listening. Not unlike O'Doherty's figure of the spectator who becomes dissociated from his own intellectual capacity by feeling the presence of his body in the spatial play of installation art. As Will Schrimshaw (Schrimshaw 2015) has noted, the arguments that promote such distinction between listening and intellection within sound (art) studies are often formed by reference to terms such as resonance or vibration as somatic, sympathetic or affective processes of subjectivity and interiority. Put in these terms it is easy to agree with Jonathan Sterne that the audiovisual litany and the sharp division between the senses that it promotes as well as its focus on sound's immersive qualities is indeed an ideological position (Sterne 2003, 16) that rests on an ahistorical and acultural view of the senses as well as of sound and art. It may very well be that immersive sound draws us in but that alone does not exclude the visual or the conceptual. Affection and intellection, interiority and exteriority, raw sense experience and discursive knowledge production, perception and signification – hearing and seeing are all binaries that form part of this construction of the litany. The metaphysics of presence inherent to these distinctions thus posits a transcendental subject (Sterne 2003, 18) that is only able to fully experience sound by immersing itself in it and, conversely, only ever able understand or theorise that experience *a posteriori* – once the immediate sensory event has passed. On the other hand, the knowledge paradigm that Seth Kim-Cohen operates within is so invested in a deconstructive regime of signification that his

account enacts an almost Cartesian dualism that fails to address more precisely how listening as a form of knowledge production involves the body as a receptive and generative constituent. Additionally, the subject-object relation implicit in Kim-Cohen's desire to understand and interpret artworks and exhibitions is in fact the same as the one that underlies audiovisual litany. Will Schrimshaw has argued that while Kim-Cohen's

> […] work is valuable for its provision of an argument against the prevalence of the phenomenological, immersive, and the ambient in sound art, his limitation of the conceptual to textualist constructivism and his affirmation of the sufficiency of the linguistic turn constitutes yet another form or horizon of interiority. (Schrimshaw 2015, 164)

This is also an unresolved issue in my discussion of the *WGSEF* installation so far. While I have taken great care to outline its institutional, conceptual and prescriptive underpinnings, I have not engaged thoroughly with the perceptive elements. In what follows I will therefore try to pursue a different knowledge paradigm that can bridge the gaps between listening and intellection as well as the often-problematic subject-object relation it implies in order to suggest other ways of listening within the exhibitory situation. As I believe my analyses have already shown, the divisions between the auditory and the visual as well as between the discursive and the experiential rest on fairly shaky ground. The binaries are ideological, historical and cultural constructs that form continuums to address rather than opposites to exclude in situational encounters with artworks or with sound.

Embodiedness and situatedness

My readings throughout the dissertation have shown that the predominant phenomenologies of listening within sound (art) studies rest on an aestheticizing reduction that is focused on sound-in-itself. Broadly speaking, this reduction rests on an epistemology of listening connected to (but departing from) the Western tradition of experimental music in combination with continental philosophy's focus on the subject as the centre of knowledge production. In this model objects only become meaningful insofar as they enter into a relation with an ideal transcendental intersubjectivity that constructs them as phenomena proper. I have rejected this model on a number of accounts. Firstly, it rests on an ahistorical view of the senses (Sterne 2003). Secondly, it is a product of ideological arguments for the differences between music and so-called sound art (Kane 2013). And thirdly, because the phenomenological reduction necessary to construct the

object of perception is problematic for a number of reasons, the most important of which is that it separates perception from signification in a wider social and historical context. The other model of explanation that I have examined in relation to sounding art practice was a deconstructive approach that I have rejected for the opposite reasons. While the deconstructive approach is able to account for the social, historical and cultural implications and conditions of artworks and exhibitions it is not able to ascribe meaning to sounding matter or to acknowledge listening as a valid form of knowledge production in itself. Even if it does critique the reductions of phenomenology and the false division of the senses, it is not able to sufficiently describe how sound can be meaningful outside traditional models of signification and language. To these objections I can also add that the notion of interiority that both models presuppose implies and reproduces a traditional subject/object dichotomy (Schrimshaw 2017, 15) that has been criticised heavily from positions that take the realist philosophy of Gilles Deleuze as their common point of departure (Cox 2011, Goodman 2010, Schrimshaw 2015, 2013, 2017). This third position can be summarised under the term "the ontological turn" as suggested by Brian Kane (Kane 2015). Seeing that both of the interpretive models I have analysed in detail so far seem to fall short of accounting adequately for the relation between sound, subject and situation, it is worth investigating this third understanding, and especially recent criticisms of it, in more detail.

Crudely summarised, the ontological turn rejects both phenomenology and deconstruction as part of its investment with sound's ontology and in its critique of the supposedly anthropocentric purview of theories of signification and the subject. As such it forms part of a larger contemporary philosophical project that concerns itself with matter and affect independent of human perception, cognition and culture. Such theoretical approaches where "subjectivity and objectivity" cannot be thought of "independently of one another" (Meillassoux 2008, 5) has been critiqued under the rubric of correlationism by the French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux. Meillassoux's critique forms part of the recent upsurge of rejections of Kantian subjectivity and thus forms the basis for many materialist and realist positions within sonic thinking. Among others, Will Schrimshaw has recently criticised correlationism within sound studies (Schrimshaw 2015, 2017), referring explicitly to Brandon LaBelle's relational definition of sound as the primary example of correlationist logic, where nothing is outside of the relation (Schrimshaw 2015, 164). However, as Brian Kane has remarked with specific address

to Christoph Cox and Steve Goodman (as well as Greg Hainge (Hainge 2013)), the philosophical orientations toward the ontology of sound and the autonomy of affect seem to

> […] neglect the role played by auditory cultures in shaping affective responses to sound and in 'ontological' claims about sound. But more than neglect, a 'sound studies' without 'auditory culture' is ultimately question-begging in that it crucially ignores the constitutive role that auditory culture plays in determining its object of study. (Kane 2015, 17)

Kane's concern is that the rejection of culture and signification inherent to these realisms doubles back on itself as a cultural construct, which in fact highlights the correlation between subject and object. It should be clear that my focus on the relational aspects of sound, listening, history, institutions and sociality in this dissertation also falls strictly under the rubric of correlationism. This is most forcefully motivated by my belief that curatorial work fundamentally is a cultural practice that is inherently correlational qua its practical orientation of staging the relational encounter between objects and subjects. Hence it makes little or no sense to rule out culture's constitutive role in the construction of the audience's meeting with and experience of the artwork. My position thus entails a suspicion against attempts at explaining sound as "a vibration passing through a given medium, conceived ontologically as an element within a broader conception of nature or the real" (Lavender 2017, 245) such as James Lavender has characterized the ontological turn within sound studies in his introduction to a recent issue of the journal Parallax entitled *Sounding / Thinking* (Lavender 2017).[129] The reason for this suspicion is that these theoretical positions, much like the ones favouring the auditory dimensions of the audiovisual litany, seem to promote an acultural view that

> […] directly challenges the relevance of research into auditory culture, audile techniques, and the technological mediation of sound in favor of universals concerning the nature of sound, the body, and media. (Kane 2015, 3)

In other words it is the exact epistemological correlationism that I have been interested in my attempts to analyse sonic knowledge production through curatorial strategies that

[129] Lavender also derives the term 'ontological turn' from Brian Kane's critique in the article "Sound Studies without Auditory Culture" (Kane 2015) of mainly Steve Goodman (Goodman 2010) and Christoph Cox (Cox 2011).

the materialist and realist positions are rejecting. However, as mentioned recent critiques of the ontological turn suggest models that seem to be able to bridge the gap between epistemology and ontology within this question in order to find a position where sounding matter, auditory phenomena (including, by extension, listening) and discursive theorizing need not be conflicting, but rather enter into meaningful relations.

In the above-mentioned introduction to the issue of Parallax, James Lavender addresses the division between the material and the cultural, or the object and its theorisation, and posits a timely and fundamental question for sound studies:

> If theory has still not become adequate to thinking sonority it is now more than ever clear that it is not a question of turning our gaze upon yet another object of analysis, but of raising the question of what relationship between thought and its object would be adequate to sonority, or if, indeed, this relation itself may not be part of the problem. (Lavender 2017, 249)

The articles in the issue set out to reinstate a notion of culture within sonic thinking that has more or less been lost under the ontological turn. For artist and theorist Annie Goh, ontological positions themselves retain "an implicit subject-object division" which "perpetuates the fiction of the non-situated observer" (Lavender 2017, 248) as Lavender rephrases it in his introduction to her article. Inspired by the writings of Donna Haraway, Goh critiques Christoph Cox's "sonic naturalism" from a feminist perspective for coming "from a disembodied rationality which engages neither with the problem of the body nor with the processes of knowledge production" (Goh 2017, 286). Returning to Haraway she suggests that the relation between subject and object or knowledge and sound can be productively thought of as a "material-semiotic figuration" (Goh 2017, 284).[130] Goh's overall aim is to

> […] centre the pressing critical re-negotiation of the subject-object relation in sound studies by arguing for the importance of both embodiedness *and* situatedness in sonic knowledge production. (Goh 2017, 284)

For my purposes, one of the most important aspects of her discussion is the use of sound anthropologist Steven Feld's classic notion of acoustemology, which she puts in the context of critical feminist perspectives on embodiedness and situatedness. Acoustemology is a neologism combining the words acoustics and epistemology coined by Feld

[130] Goh quotes Donna Haraway's article "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" (Haraway 1988, 595).

as a consequence of extensive fieldwork among the Kaluli people in the Bosavi rainforest of Papua New Guinea (Feld 1990). Feld discovered how the intricate relations between population, place, embodiment, myth and history constituted an ecology of sounding and sonic knowing by which the Kaluli people defines their relation to the world. In Feld's optics the term acoustemology can thus be defined as "a relational ontology" (Feld 2015, 13). As such it also resonates with Tim Ingold's idea of intransitivity where material and affective forces form complex meshworks of inhabitation through relational agencies (Ingold 2011, 12). Despite the apparent force of the concept, acoustemology has remained a descriptive catchphrase within sound studies to denote the intricate relations between affect, knowledge production, place, sound and communication. However, Feld has recently developed its theoretical affinities to other areas in a relatively short handbook text from 2015 (Feld 2015). He aligns it with central theories of agency and positions it firmly within contemporary debate in sound studies and anthropology. Acoustemology, he writes,

> […] engages acoustics at the plane of the audible – *akoustos* – to enquire into sounding as simultaneously social and material, an experiential nexus of sonic sensation. (Feld 2015, 12)

The central word here is sounding. The verbal form denotes a field of practice and agency rather than a material essence (sound) or a reflexive or intellectual mode of inquiry (as in listening or interpreting). Sounding is thus not solely about listening understood as a subject making sense of an object. Rather it is a reciprocal relational practice between human and material actors. Acoustemology's inquiry into sounding thus

> […] asks if what are more typically theorized as subject-object relations are in fact more deeply known, experienced, imagined, enacted, and embodied as subject-subject relations. (Feld 2015, 19)

Feld's development of the term is based on fieldwork in the Bosavi rainforest and it is central to his argument that it rests on empirical findings of the relations between this particular place and its (human as well as non-human) inhabitants' sonic sensibilities and communicative capacities in sound. Acoustemology then entails that sensibilities and capacities are tied to a specific location and defined in terms of an embodied and culturally particular sense of knowing. In the context of curatorial engagement with exhibition making it may then tentatively be argued that an acoustemological approach may enable a mode of knowledge production that does not exclude or factor out either the sounding, social, material, cultural and/or historical relations within the situation but rather addresses it in its complex and contradictory totality

Exhibitory situatedness

Another aspect of Annie Goh's critique that is interesting from my perspective is the reference to Donna Haraway in which the ideas of situated knowledges and diffraction come to be central points for the discussion of sounding. I already touched on Haraway's idea of the partial perspective in Chapter 2, which is closely connected to her discussions of knowledge and diffraction. From Haraway's perspective, and as a critique of the western (white, male) ideal of objectivity, knowledges are necessarily in the plural and they are always situated and it is precisely the idea of situatedness that warrants their objectivity (Haraway 1988, 581). However, the situatedness is not only tied to a specific place or a specific historical or social context. It is also tied closely to the body, which Haraway understands as "complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured" (Haraway 1988, 589). As Annie Goh also remarks (Goh 2017, 292), situatedness in Haraway's sense is about the "*situatedness* of the situated. In other words it is a way to get at the multiple modes of embedding that are about both place and space" (Haraway and Goodeve 2000, 71). If the relations produced in the encounter with a sounding situation are bodily mediated in this way it entails that knowledge is not only being constructed through a structuring body that perceives. Rather it is also a body that *is* already structured to perceive and to produce knowledge in certain specific ways as opposed to others. Thus being situated is not only about entering into a relational situation (as in the ones that sound engender), but also about taking one's own situatedness as a precondition for any understanding of the situation, qua embodiedness, qua cultural inscription on one's body, and qua the precepts embedded within these inscriptions and this situation.

In light of the weight that Haraway gives to embodiedness and situatedness in her material-semiotic figurations, the contradictions between sound-in-itself and signification asserted both by Cox and Kim-Cohen (Cox 2011, Kim-Cohen 2009, 2016) (differences of their arguments aside) look more or less to be predicated upon a Cartesian dualism and a subject/object understanding, which presupposes that ontologies and epistemologies do not interact. Similarly, the epistemological reductions necessary for Voegelin to get at a sonic materiality beneath the visual and the textual hegemony of the everyday lifeworld (Voegelin 2014a) disregard the semiotic elements of a Harawayan situatedness. Even if Voegelin tries to write sound from a bodily encounter and as a diffractive

strategy, she does so from a perceiving body that might well be situated but is nonetheless forgetful of its own situatedness in a Harawayan sense. Drawing on gender theorist Nikki Sullivan, sound scholar Marie Thompson has noted that perception is

> […] not considered a neutral process of mediation; nor something that a perceiving subject processes. Rather, perception is a shared, social and co-constitutive process that shapes and is shaped by knower and known, perceiver and perceived. It is an effect and vehicle of sedimented contextual knowledges, which 'constitutes that which it presumes to merely apprehend'. (Thompson 2017, 273)[131]

While it is in accordance with Voegelin's view that perception is embodied and relational, her arguments as I presented them in Chapter 4 disregard the constitutional role of such sedimented contextual knowledges as that which constructs the situatedness. Sounding artworks are not discursive statements – neither are they merely material configurations. They enable material-semiotic relations the meanings of which are dependent on the situation they engender, the situation they are placed within, and the situatedness of their audiences. Returning to Steven Feld this situatedness is one of the founding principles for acoustemology as a material-semiotic practice, which Vogelin, Cox and Kim-Cohen alike fail to acknowledge. This leads me to conclude that there is a gap between current sound art theory and the situatedness which characterises so-called sound art's exhibitory situations.

While the idea of acoustemology is perhaps not directly transferable as a critical curatorial strategy to overcome the institutional conventions of the white cube it does point out ways to work with the contexts and situatedness of sounding situations in this setting. The western idea of the artwork is in a sense both antithetical to and convergent with the notion of acoustemology. The artwork is culturally embedded through and through but part of this embeddedness rests on its strangeness or otherness from the very cultural situation it is embedded within. Each time we enter the white cube and encounter an artwork we are confronted with something known and something which confronts our previous understandings of artworks and situations – something which confronts what we thought we knew. This relation between the artwork and the subject is enculturated in ways similar to an acoustemological way of knowing, sedimented through time by institutions and history as well as cultural, social and material relations. Yet the element of newness or otherness presented by the artwork seems to question

[131] Thompson quotes (Sullivan 2012, 315).

the subject's situatedness. As such, the artwork within the gallery space can be described with reference to Victor Turner as a liminoid element (Schechner 2013, 67) in the performance of listening and/or spectatorship. It may enable a slight change in the ritual conditions of its own appearance that may or may not alter the overall understanding of the situation in question, including the situatedness of the perceiver.

It is worth noting that Feld describes acoustemology in anthropological terms that do not strive for the quasi-positivist ideals of objectivity that underpin realism or the desire for the artwork to be a closed unit of signification that run through discursive interpretations. Rather,

> [t]he kind of knowing that acoustemology tracks in and through sound and sounding is always experiential, contextual, fallible, changeable, contingent, emergent, opportune, subjective, constructed, selective. (Feld 2015, 14)

This entwinement of matter, sensation and meaning within the acoustemological approach thus works both on discursive and non-discursive levels – or, put otherwise, it is a material-semiotic figuration which foregrounds a relational and agential form of embodied knowledge production that is not necessarily connected to, nor necessarily disjoint from, representational logic. Sonic knowledges are in the plural and the relation to their objects are processual and reciprocal. Understanding acoustemology as a material-semiotic practice in line with an anthropology of sound further enables an approach that is able to account for the relations between the situation and the situatedness of its observer from a point of view that can engage empirically with the "normative conventions of art theory itself" (Kester 2011, 11) from a denaturalised perspective (see page 112). As such the acoustemological approach has underpinned my analyses of the white cube and the extensions of its characteristics into the normative assumptions of sound art theory and discourse.

While the anthropological methodologies implied by Feld's use of acoustemology are perhaps not directly transferable from an anthropology of sound to curatorial practice, the approach offers a theoretical perspective which affords a diffractive mode of analysis that is able to criticise sound art theory from inside curatorial practice. It is not within the scope, aim or interest of an acoustemology to posit a general theory or a set of normative suggestions for the curation of so-called sound art. Each place, each space, each curatorial or artistic practice, each artwork and each wider institutional situation must be addressed and negotiated locally and singularly within each new project. As

my analyses have shown, the exhibition is an enculturated space also at the level of sound and listening and this enculturation seems to favour the certain institutionalised forms of immersive listening I have critiqued in the above. Approaching the exhibition curatorially via an acoustemological approach enables us to account for the situatedness of the listener while still affording an opportunity to acknowledge, listen to, and theorise the otherness of the artwork. Thus, it also enables us to locate a place for a critical mode of listening that can account for the de- and recontextualisations of sound within the physical, metaphorical and conceptual walls of the placeless white cube.

8. Concluding remarks

This dissertation has explored the idea of a resonant art museum in terms of the relational reciprocity between sound, museum, listeners, curatorship, and the wider social and political contexts these constitute and produce. As a practitioner within this field I have undertaken cultural analyses and critiques from an enmeshed position that resonates with its surroundings. My embeddedness within my empirical field and the situated and partial perspectives I have applied to it have somewhat departed from traditional ideals of scholarly distance to arrive at a form of criticality driven by a strong motivation to engage in the political contexts of my curatorial work. One of the major contributions that the resonant perspective has enabled is a focus on combining the aesthetic discourses on sound art with a commitment to cultural analysis and critique. This perspective has opened for discussions of the social and cultural conditions and codifications of listening in the museum context not yet described in the literature on museums or sound art. On an overall level I have described how contemporary art with sound and contemporary art museums are imbricated in the larger societal fabric and how this imbrication affects and partly determines the scope of their imaginaries. As museum professionals we form part of the production and reproduction of values within these systems. In the dissertation I have analysed these values within a biopolitical frame, on the basis of which my critique must be seen.

The most crucial concept developed in the dissertation is the contextualist notion of sounding situations that has been gradually developed and applied. This fundamental condition of the encounter between sound and listener has often been obscured or neglected in the reception of sound art. Specifically, I have examined work-centred approaches aiming to define sound art as a specific artistic genre or in terms of its medium. The downside to these approaches is that they place too much emphasis on the statement of the artwork and the intention of the artist to be able to account for the concrete context of audition. Sounding art is reduced to a hermeneutical encounter with its conceptual elements. As a contrast to such approaches I have also examined a subject-centred orientation that aims to afford listening a special status in a hierarchy of the senses. This approach focuses on the generative act of listening as a critical practice in itself – as a subversive counterpoint to visually and textually constructed knowledge/power formations. This understanding of listening as a critical practice that involves an avant-garde ethics of transgression has been challenged on a number of

occasions. Mainly because it implies a focus on immersion in a supposed purity of sonic materiality that obscures the significance of concrete encounters with sound in concrete contexts. And because this approach disregards the important historical, cultural and social elements that determine such encounters. Listening is surrounded by all manner of contexts that it is informed by. The notion of the situation both critiques and combines these two approaches and shows how the situatedness and embeddedness of artworks *and* listeners alike are central to the understanding of how matter, sensation and meaning are inextricably entwined in the encounter with sounding artworks. The reciprocal relationships enacted in sounding situations are thus constructed as resonant in the sense that they involve both perception and the subject as well as social reality and acoustic materiality.

Throughout the dissertation I have implicitly connected two sub-domains within sound studies, namely sound art and auditory culture. This perspective has enabled that a certain amount of social analysis has been applied to a field of aesthetic discourse and – vice versa – that social analysis has been carried out from an aesthetic position. While both sub-domains are important areas within sound studies they have rarely been combined. The present dissertation is an attempt to do so but I believe the field calls for further exploration within sound studies in combination with other adjacent disciplines. One of those disciplines should be museology. I have not addressed this issue explicitly in the dissertation but I have made it evident in my analyses that the new museology primarily is constructed from a Foucauldian perspective that implies a strong focus on visibility as an important element in the museum's regulatory scheme. To counter that I have made the first attempt at constructing the exhibition space through auditory metaphors but much work still needs to be done. Especially regarding how the auditory dimension enacts its own regulative schemes and how these schemes can be negotiated artistically and curatorially without subjecting their critique to the simplistic idealisms implied within the audiovisual litany.

The tenacious focus on the social and historical contexts of sound, listening and the art museum throughout the dissertation has implied a political perspective and critique. I have viewed the museum institution through a prism of biopolitics within which the specific discourses on sound and sound art have been analysed. The combination and cross-pollination of perspectives has been useful to denaturalise some of the normative conventions that underpin aesthetic discourse on sound and sound art. Through detailed

analyses and a combination of the notion of sounding situations with the archive and the exhibition, I have shown how museum practice enacts and is permeated by biopolitical agendas on various levels. Related to the archive these agendas are traditionally expressed through the authoritative role given to the art museum collection and archives. However, work with collections and archives are under pressure from another, equally biopolitically imbricated, perspective of user orientation. This is related to the way art is increasingly being made a resource for other agendas related to corporatism, the state and policy-making. Related to the exhibition the biopolitical underpinnings are primarily connected to the regulatory scheme of the white cube. Here I have shown how the predominantly visual construction of the exhibition space enacts a reduction also connected to sound and sonic art practice. Furthermore, I have shown how this reduction is doubled by the conventions of so-called sound art and its related theories and histories. The biopolitical perspective is thus not just related to the larger societal and political frame and the relations between institutions, state and capital. Rather it permeates everyday practice at museums through the operations with which museum professionals engage with their audiences. Both via traditions and work divisions, and through the legislative and economic possibilities and restraints that museums work within.

One of the presently most worrying developments within this complex is the tendency towards expediency that I have identified and discussed. Within this expedient regime art becomes a resource and answer to societal and political concerns instead of a fundamental questioning of their conditions. This political focus on art's function for social and sustainable community-building works as a tactic for the government of the self. It also works through the economic incentives and desires for visibility and spectacle that govern museum practice – and as such it partly empties art of its critical and subversive potential. Or at least makes it difficult for artistic and curatorial practices to enact criticism and transgression within the confines of the museum institution. The institutional space for critique or dissent is rather narrow and somewhat pessimistically construed within this expedient regime. This means that a lot of important work has to find other ways of sustaining itself outside or on the fringes of the institution. For reasons of heritage and safeguarding this is problematic because such critical practices are then likely to fall out of cultural memory. As such, the focus on art's expediency as a social and

political tool reinforces the existing power/knowledge formations within neoliberal governance and corporate capital.

The dissertation has been written in response to a period of practical curatorial work. Although theory and practice go hand in hand, this means that I have looked at my fieldwork in retrospect and developed the dissertation's theoretical apparatus in hindsight. The strong focus on concrete empirical contexts throughout my work has disabled the development of prescriptive curatorial perspectives for the work with sounding situations. I believe that situations, audiences and artworks deserve the curatorial respect of being treated as individuals where the differences that matter are always specific to the concrete context. This means that there is still room to test and develop the validity of the analyses and theoretical arguments in practical terms in order to assess their applicability in other contexts. My reluctance to draw generalising conclusions from my work is thus doubly motivated. Partly because I believe that such generalisations produce and maintain normative patterns of production and reception – both related to art theory in general and sound theory in specific but also related to the lager political frame of my work. The other reason is that I think the insistence on the particularity and singularity of the situational perspective can counterbalance the generalised forms of dissent that the notion of expediency implies. It can act to maintain the relative autonomy and paradoxical character of the artwork, which is important if we want to maintain that art can be a relevant and critical force in contemporary society. As such, future work on and with sounding situations may open up for new modes of criticality that can enable artistic and curatorial work to inhabit a space where dissent is not merely affirmative but has the potential to antagonistically matter in the concrete located contexts it resonates within.

A resonant museum in this context would mean a museum that is able and willing to make space for these antagonisms and connect them openly to its own biopolitical situation as a way of escaping the neoliberal agenda and reimagining the relations between pasts, presents and futures anew.

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Abstract

The dissertation *The Resonant Museum: Sound, Art and the Politics of Curating* explores the relational reciprocity between sound, museum, listening, curatorship and the wider social and political contexts these constitute and produce. Its point of departure is a series of curatorial projects carried out by the author at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde, Denmark. Through an embedded methodology of curating-as-fieldwork I analyse and critique curatorial practice, sound art discourse and the museum institution. The figure of resonance works as a fundamental relational model of thinking that permeates the dissertation. In this model museums, art practices and curatorship all resonate with their social and political surroundings and histories. As such, resonance also describes how curatorship both sets in motion and is set in motion. Doing research by curating-as fieldwork literally resonates with its surroundings.

The two fundamental variables in this relational model is the art museum and sonic art practice that are both viewed from a curatorial perspective and within a biopolitical frame. This frame enables an analysis that combines the current political situation of art museums in Denmark with aesthetic discourses on sound. The combination of these perspectives provides a view that is able to perform cultural analysis and political criticality situated within contemporary museum practice and curatorship.

The relationship between immersive listening and discursive interpretation that underpins sound art discourse figures on several levels in the dissertation. I argue that the tension between these elements is important and that it can be addressed through the concept of sounding situations that I develop and refine. Sounding situations are first and foremost embodied and situated – but they are also culturally conditioned and contextualised. This enables a curatorial perspective where the situatedness of artworks, listeners, institutions *and* politics alike becomes central to the understanding of how matter, sensation and meaning are inextricably entwined in the encounter with sounding artworks. The concept of sounding situations is unfolded specifically in relation to museum practices regarding the archive and the exhibition.

Combining museology and sound studies, the dissertation discusses how current political debates about the role of the art museum can be reinvigorated by the perspectives of artistic and curatorial practice with sound.

Resume

Afhandlingen *The Resonant Museum: Sound, Art and the Politics of Curating* udforsker den relationelle gensidighed mellem lyd, museet, lytning, kuratering og det bredere felt af sociale og politiske kontekster, som disse konstituerer og producerer. Udgangspunktet er en række kuratoriske projekter gennemført af forfatteren på Museet for Samtidskunst i Roskilde, Danmark. Gennem en indlejret metodisk tilgang, der anvender kuratering som feltarbejde, analyseres og kritiseres både den kuratoriske praksis, forskellige diskurser om lydkunst og museumsinstitutionen. Resonansfiguren udgør en grundlæggende relationel model for tænkningen i afhandlingen. I denne model resonerer museer, kunstpraksisser og min egen praksis med deres tilhørende sociale og politiske omgivelser og historier. Som sådan beskriver resonansfiguren, hvordan kuratering både sætter i bevægelse, og hvordan den er sat i bevægelse. Forskning udført gennem kuratering som feltarbejde resonerer således bogstavelig talt med dennes omgivelser.

De to grundlæggende variabler i den relationelle model er kunstmuseet og kunsterisk praksis med lyd. Begge belyses fra et kuratorisk perspektiv og i en biopolitisk ramme, som muliggør en analyse, der kombinerer den aktuelle politiske situation for kunstmuseer i Danmark med æstetiske diskurser vedrørende lyd. Ved at kombinere disse perspektiver skabes et blik, der kan udøve kulturanalyse og politisk kritikalitet fra indersiden af samtidens kuraterings- og museumspraksis.

Det forhold mellem immersiv lytning og diskursiv fortolkning, der gennemsyrer lydkunstdiskursen, figurerer på flere niveauer i afhandlingen. Jeg argumenterer for, at spændingsforholdet mellem disse elementer er vigtigt, og at det kan forstås gennem begrebet 'lydende situationer', som jeg udvikler og raffinerer. Lydende situationer er først og fremmest kropsligt forankrede og situerede, men de er også kulturelt betingede og kontekstualiserede. Begrebet muliggør et kuratorisk perspektiv, hvor kunstværker, lyttere, institutioner *og* politik grundlæggende er situeret i et fælles rum, der kan fordre en forståelse af, hvordan materiale, sansning og betydning er uløseligt sammenfiltrede i mødet med de lydende kunstværker. Begrebet om lydende situationer udfoldes specifikt i afhandlingen i relation til arkivet og udstillingen som centrale museumspraksisser.

Ved at kombinere museologi og lydstuder diskuterer afhandlingen dermed, hvordan aktuelle politiske debatter om museets rolle i samfundet kan fornys ud fra kunstneriske og kuratoriske praksisser med lyd.

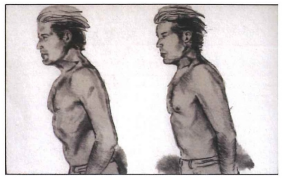


Fig. 2 – Den total vejrtrækning, 2. trin. Udvid ribbenene og fyld den mellemste del af brystet med luft. fig. 3 - 3. trin. Forsæt indåndingen, så luften fylder den øverste del af bryst og lunger.

Fig. 5 – Stempel-vejr-trækning, 3. trin. Træk maven ind, så luften presses ud.

Fig. 6 – Stempel-vjr-trækning, 4. trin. Skyd maven ud, når næste indånding skal begynde.

Fig. 8 – Den låsende vejrtrækning, 2. trin. Luk for ørerne med tommelfingrene, for øjnene med pegefingrene og for munden med ringfingrene forneden.

Den totale vejrtrækning

1. Ånd langsomt ind gennem næsen og ret åndedraget direkte mod et punkt ca. 5 cm under navlen. Det vil fylde den nederste del af lungerne med luft. Når du gør det, vil maven begynde at bule ud som en ballon. Se fig. 1.
2. Fyld efterhånden som du forsætter indåndingen resten af maveregionen med luft, udvid så ribbenene til siderne og fyld den midterste del af brystkassen med luft. Se fig.2.
3. Fyld til sidst den øverste del af lungerne med luft ved at løfte brystkassen og lad den udvide sig til siderne. Hele processen bør tage ca. 5 sekunder. Se fig. 3.
4. Hold så vejret i 5 sekunder. Med lidt øvelse vil du efterhånden blive i stand til at holde vejret i 10 sekunder, så du giver lungerne en chance for at bruge og absorbere al ilten.
5. Ved udåndingen følger du den samme proces som ved indåndingen. Begynd med at trække den nederste del af maven sammen ganske blidt. Det vil presse luften ud af den nederste del af lungerne og vil automatisk trække al restluft med ud. Efterhånden som den nederste del af lungerne tømmes for luft, vil også ribbenssektionen langsomt tabe luft, fulgt af den øverste del af brystet. Udåndingen bør være lige så langsom som indåndingen.
6. Når udåndingen er nået helt til bunds, holder man pause 1-2 sekunder, før man begynder den næste indånding.

Den livgivende vejrtrækning

1. Pres langfingeren på højre hånd mod midten af panden og luk højre næsebor med højre tommelfinger. Se fig. 4.
2. Tag så en langsom total indånding gennem venstre næsebor, mens du tæller til ti.
3. Luk for det venstre næsebor med ringfingeren og hold vejret, mens du tæller til ti.
4. Ved udåndingen slipper du med tommelfingeren og ånder langsomt ud gennem det højre næsebor, mens du tæller til ti.
5. Hold pause, mens du tæller til to.
6. Hold det højre næsebor åbent og tag en langsom total indånding, mens du tæller til ti.
7. Luk så det højre næsebor med tommelfingeren og hold vejret mens du tæller til ti.
8. Slip med ringefingeren og ånd ud mens du tæller til ti.
9. Hold pause, mens du tæller til to. Fortsæt øvelsen med skiftende næsebor, indtil du har haft ti indåndinger gennem hver side.

Stempel-vejrtrækning

1. Indtag en bekvem retstilling.
2. Tag en total indånding.
3. Ånd hurtigt ud gennem næsen ved at trække maven ind så langt som muligt. Se fig. 5.
4. Lad mavemusklerne slappe af og tag samtidigt en ny total indånding. Se fig. 6.
5. Gentag denne indånding og kraftige udånding ti gange i træk. Maven skal bevæge sig hurtigt ind og ud som et stempel, og vejrtrækningen skal lyde som et damptog der går i gang.
6. Efter den tiende gang tager man en total indånding. Hold vejret i fem sekunder og ånd ud.

Hvislende vejrtrækning

1. Tag en total indånding.
2. Ånd langsomt ud gennem munden med en hvislende lyd. Bid tænderne sammen og ånd ud, som om du ville sige »s«. Se fig. 7.
3. Gentag det ti gange. Bagefter føler du dig behagelig ren og mat.

Den låsende vejrtrækning

1. tag en total indånding og hold vejret.
2. Lås alle sanseorganerne. Anbring hver tommelfinger over øreåbningen, så du lukker af for al lyd. Anbring så pegefingrene nederst på øjenlågene lige over øjenvipperne. Med langefingrene presser du begge næseborene til. Endelig lukker du læberne med ringfingre og lillefingre. Se fig. 8.
3. Hold vejret så længe du kan uden at føle ubehag.
4. Ved at presse øjenlågene blidt med pegefingrene stimulerer du synsnerverne til indre syner.
5. Hold øjnene lukkede og slip med fingrene og ånd ud.

Den fuldstændige vejrtrækning

1. Anbring begge tommelfingre opadvendt ind mod rygraden ca. 5 cm under skulderbladene. Fingrene skal hvile på siderne af ribbenene lige under brystet Albuerne skal stikke bagud til siderne, så de ser ud som vinger. Se fig. 9.
2. Tag en langsom total indånding. Hændernes og armenes stilling gør det meget lettere for lungerne at udvide sig. Man kan især mærke udvidelsen, når luften kommer ind i den midterste del af brystkassen. Ribbenene løftes op og ud.
3. Hold vejret, mens du tæller til tyve, og lad kroppen vænne sig til størst mulig udvidelse og grundig gennemluftning.
4. Hold hænderne på plads og ånd langsomt ud.
5. Gentag processen ti gange.

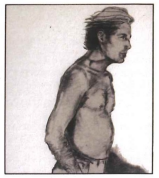


Fig. 1 – Den totale vejrtrækning, 1. trin. Gør maven slap og lad den bulne ud, mens den nederste del af lungerne fyldes med luft

Fig. 4 – Den livgivende vejrtrækning, 2. trin. Forstil dig indåndingsluften rettet mod midten af panden.

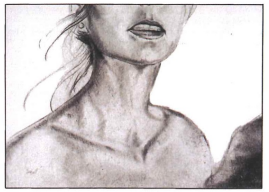


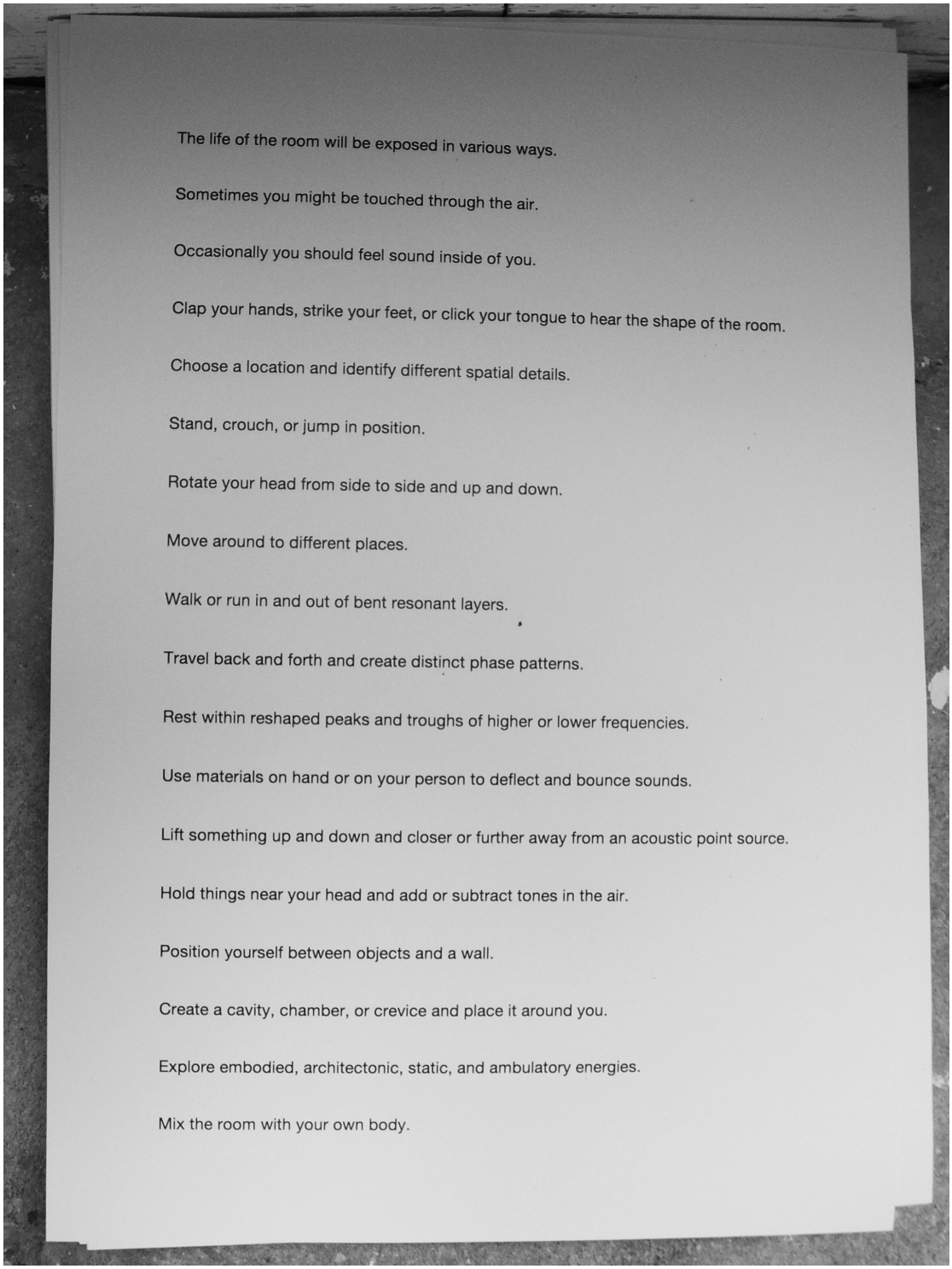
Fig. 7 – hvislende vejrtrækning, 2. trin. Træk læberne tilbage og stød luften ud mellem lukkede tænder.

Fig. 9 – Den fuldstændige vejrtrækning. 1. trin. For at hjælpe lungerne til at udvide sig, anbringer du tommelfingrene opadvendt ind mod rygraden.

Andreas Führer: *The Map is Not the Territory, D'Or?* (2014), scan (original size: A3)

Appendix 2

Working Group for Sound in the Expanded Field propositions, b/w photo (original size: A3)



The life of the room will be exposed in various ways.

Sometimes you might be touched through the air.

Occasionally you should feel sound inside of you.

Clap your hands, strike your feet, or click your tongue to hear the shape of the room.

Choose a location and identify different spatial details.

Stand, crouch, or jump in position.

Rotate your head from side to side and up and down.

Move around to different places.

Walk or run in and out of bent resonant layers.

Travel back and forth and create distinct phase patterns.

Rest within reshaped peaks and troughs of higher or lower frequencies.

Use materials on hand or on your person to deflect and bounce sounds.

Lift something up and down and closer or further away from an acoustic point source.

Hold things near your head and add or subtract tones in the air.

Position yourself between objects and a wall.

Create a cavity, chamber, or crevice and place it around you.

Explore embodied, architectonic, static, and ambulatory energies.

Mix the room with your own body.